

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN MILLENNIAL
PASTORS AND BABY BOOMER
CONGREGANTS

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ABSTRACT

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The ministry context is Quinn Chapel AME Church. This project seeks to address the recurring disconnect and generational divide among millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants. My hypothesis is if participants engage in an eight-week empowerment session on young leaders in the Bible, then there will be a change in their attitudes toward young leadership within the church. The methodology in this study utilized data collection tools pre- and post- survey, journal entries, and sticky note takeaways, along with weekly discussions. The project implementation successfully addressed the generational gap between the millennial pastor and baby boomer congregants.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This journey has been one of the most memorable seasons of my life. I give thanks to God for allowing me to see His goodness in the land of the living. I know I entered this program with my own agenda, but I am leaving with so much more.

I acknowledge the love and support of my family and friends. To my father, Raymond Canley, who has supported me in all my endeavors, big and small, thank you for instilling to always finish well in everything I do. To my grandfather and grandmother, Ernie and Kay Alonzo, for your prayers and encouragement while pursuing my God-given dreams. Thank you.

I express my greatest appreciation to the African Methodist Episcopal Church. To the AME Finance Department, thank you for your patience and support throughout my educational journey. I appreciate the love expressed by the members of Quinn Chapel AME Church, thank you for your mentorship and support throughout this entire process. A special acknowledgment to Sister Merkia Key, thank you for your wisdom and insight over the years. Your contributions will forever be cherished.

Most importantly, to my mentors, Dr. Jamison Hunter and Dr. George Parks, Jr., thank you for your unwavering support. Your commitment to excellence has challenged me academically, spiritually, and personally. To my editor, Dr. Lori D. Spears, thank you for your guidance and prayers.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated in memory of two extraordinary women who have shaped my life in immeasurable ways: my mother, the late Brenda Lynn and my bonus mother, the late Brenetta Lee. Your love, wisdom, and strength continue to inspire me each day. Though you are no longer with us, your legacy lives on.

This achievement reflects the foundation you both laid, and I carry your memory with me in all that I do.

INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this project is to address the disconnect that often occurs among generational divides, particularly among millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants. For the benefit of the local church, it is essential that millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants serve together in harmony and oneness. This can be a challenging process for both generations as their backgrounds, mindsets, and values differ in various ways. As new generations of leaders are being raised up, this work is essential in ensuring that the local church is a place where individuals of all ages can grow and fellowship. This project examines the perspectives and experiences of baby boomer congregants with millennial pastors. By studying young biblical leaders and examining their characteristics and abilities despite their age, congregants may develop a greater trust and support towards millennial leaders. The common goal of this research is to identify ways to bring about a change in heart and mindset toward millennial leaders. This research will also help millennial pastors better connect with and lead baby boomer congregants. This bridge can be made by focusing on four foundations that provide greater insight to intergenerational ministry biblically, historically, theologically, and interdisciplinary.

Chapter one focuses on the synergy between my journey as a millennial and the passion I possess for intergenerational ministry. Perseverance has been a common thread throughout my ministry journey having accepted my call at the age of twelve. I

believe it is crucial for young leaders and pastors to feel supported and affirmed in every context. In most instances throughout my life, I have been named as “the youngest” of my accomplishments. With that comes the struggle to establish trust and credibility with older generations. Over the years, denominations have made significant success in promoting millennials to various leadership roles and pulpit opportunities, but there is still more work to do. That work begins when millennials and baby boomers work together to accomplish kingdom goals. An atmosphere was created at Quinn Chapel AME Church where baby boomer congregants have the freedom to discuss and share their thoughts concerning millennial pastors. My hope is to create a stronger sense of connection and unity between millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants.

Chapter two provides a biblical foundation exploring the rich model of intergenerational ministry through the life of young Timothy. This chapter provides an exegetical analysis of 1 Timothy 4:12-16. Timothy was advised by Paul not to allow others to despise him because of his youthfulness. His unwavering faith and clear conscience became an example to learn from by millennial leaders today. In the Old Testament, several young kings are recorded who ascended the throne as early as seven years of age. This chapter further explores the theme of steadfastness found in 2 Timothy 1:5. The biblical foundation of this project captures the essence of the fruitful partnership that can take place among millennial leaders and baby boomer congregants.

Chapter three provides a historical foundation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the young founder, Richard Allen. The AME Church was founded to give African Americans a safe place to worship, pray, and grow in their God-given talents. Richard Allen was a clergyman, author, and prominent young leader who became a

change agent for the church and slavery. Training himself to read and write, he constantly did all that he could to continue his education and remain prepared to sustain what would be the largest and oldest black denominations in the world.

Chapter four provides a theological foundation by applying the concept of practical theology. By connecting real world experiences with theological theory, practical theology is most suitable for bridging the generational gaps that occur among local churches. This chapter stresses the importance of addressing the issues and opportunities that arise in the contemporary world. Practical theology, greatly influenced by Martin Luther and John Calvin, still has a great impact on the church highlighting the significance of the pastor's role and pastoral care. With a strong emphasis on spiritual and emotional well-being, practical theology encourages the church to address the daily challenges and issues they face in their daily walk with Christ. Practical theology is a necessary foundation to promote unity and cohesiveness in the local church.

Chapter five provides an interdisciplinary foundation by exploring the aspect of utilizing intergenerational communication within the local church. This chapter defines intergenerational communication along with theories and concepts that can benefit the future of the church and intergenerational ministries. There are various communication obstacles that are often encountered by both millennials and baby boomers. The evolution of communication comes with distinct prospects and difficulties weakening generational interactions within the local church. Each generation has distinct communication outlooks, preferences, and attitudes. It is through these various distinctions, that a problem can be solved to create a more effective method of communication that

accommodates the pastor and congregants. Every day social, cultural, and religious preferences alter the way we receive and accept communication.

Chapter six provides a project analysis of the project methodology, implementation, and findings. This project acknowledges the importance of becoming a bridge builder and eliminating generational divides. Eight participants, ranging from ages fifty-nine to seventy-three consented to being a part of the study. Participants took part in the study by committing to an eight-week series of empowerment sessions. A post-survey was given at the beginning of the study to gain a better understanding of how they perceived millennials and their perspective towards millennial leaders and pastors. A post-survey was also given at the conclusion of the implementation. This survey was a physical tool to measure the success of the empowerment sessions. Each participant provided a one-sentence takeaway each week with a sticky note. Encouraging open and honest communication, participants were asked to journal each week about the various sessions and discussions. This chapter contains the overall findings of the project.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

Although my story is not perfect, I strongly believe that everything is purposefully designed by God. My journey, more than anything has taught me perseverance. The common thread throughout my story has been perseverance. I believe perseverance is crucial because it pushes an individual to overcome obstacles, navigate challenges, and achieve long term goals. It fosters resilience, builds character, and allows for personal and professional growth, which I believe is very necessary when building relationships among different generations. I have learned how to push through despite all odds. I remember when I first entered ministry, some did not support me because they felt as though I had not experienced life enough to help someone else along the way. In God's own way he uses our circumstances to show someone else that it can be done. I owe the world to the people who have constantly supported and pushed me through my worst seasons. Everyone has a story, and that is usually what makes them who they are. Overall, God has placed me in the right season, with the right people, at the right time.

God has truly developed my ministry skills in incredible ways. First, he has blessed me with an administrative gift. I enjoy keeping things structured and organized. I do well with helping others stay in order administratively. I have worked for pastors who were visionaries but needed someone to take care of the administrative things. I realize

that God has gifted me with unique abilities, and I embrace them every chance that I get. I currently serve as the Communication Coordinator of the AME Church. I can assess the technology and media needs of our meetings locally and nationally. God has also developed my skill of preaching. The deeper I have grown in my relationship with God the more I have grown with my preaching, and research is God given, therefore making me better in all areas of my ministry. I believe that I have much room for growth. I want to deepen my understanding of the Bible. I need to enhance my leadership skills, to lead well in all seasons. I am aspiring to be more empathetic and effective in all that I do within the ministry. I have learned to become more flexible and adaptable to the needs of the congregation and not just what I believe is best. I am working to also better understand the traditional norms that more than likely will stay with the culture of the church till it closes its doors. I am also learning to implement self-care, making it a priority for my personal well-being. I am at my best when attending networking opportunities to better steward the church and its opportunities for advancement and community participation.

I believe as a female and as an African American, God has placed an assignment on my life to be socially and civically engaged. I have always done my best to use my platform to uplift women and the black community. Over the years, we have seen tremendous progress, but not enough. I have made it my duty to always speak up and never turn a blind eye to the things that plague our communities. I value the importance of community engagement and volunteerism. I cannot serve my community well if I am not physically involved. I challenge my membership to also be involved in their community and the life of the church. Also, networking and building relationships with

other giants in the faith has also challenged and pushed me to be a better thinker and become more open minded. The opinions and insight of others are not always our beliefs, but it broadens our thinking and enlightens our perspective. I have developed great relationships with community leaders and non-profit organizations. When my community has a need I have a strong confidence that they will always hear me out and do what they can within reason. I grew up in the church, but every day I learn something new. The world is constantly changing, and I am working to take what has been familiar and enhancing it be fit this new day and age. Being a woman, I have also learned to be okay with who I am. I have learned that being me is the very best that I can give.

I do believe however, that God has blessed me with many strengths for ministry. I have taken the time to identify my strengths through self-reflection and assessments to understand what I do best. I have been honest with myself to observe what I do well and the areas in which I need help. I am very passionate about working collaboratively with others while recognizing and leveraging their strengths. I am constantly doing all that I can to invest in myself. I work well with tailoring my involvement in ministry activities to capitalize on my strengths to make a more significant impact. I had the opportunity to work in a lot of different settings such as ministry, higher education, non-profit, and corporate. I believe that I bring a new perspective to ministry because of the various opportunities I have had with many people, backgrounds, and contexts. I would consider another strength of mine to be is the ability to meet people where they are. I can connect with people on all levels finding some way to connect and build relationships with them. I continue to work hard to craft my preaching and communication skills. I have developed a greater love for teaching Bible study and incorporating fun and innovate

teaching methods. I have done well with managing all our monetary assessments and due dates. I consider my ability to work through conflicts in meetings and one on one sessions has been affective. I am an ongoing work in progress, but I am committed to learning and growing.

Context

For the past year and two months I had the privilege of serving as the Senior Pastor of Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1883 by a group of dedicated Christians. Most founders and continued generations have all been closely related. The beliefs of Quinn Chapel serve true to the AME motto, “God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, the Holy Spirit our Comforter, and Humankind our Family.” Quinn Chapel is a traditional black church located on the outskirts of Crossett, Arkansas. It once sat on the ground of the now Quinn Chapel Cemetery. The church was named after the bishop at that time, Bishop Paul Quinn. My ministry context takes place in “the natural state” of Arkansas. The name originated from the Quapaw Indians and French settlers. The state of Arkansas is made up of six regions. Arkansas is known for its rich agriculture and southern hospitality. It is mostly a conservative republican state. The state has made several advancements in the cropping industry, livestock, as well as paper and chemical products. Quinn Chapel is in Crossett, Arkansas. Crossett is located right below the Louisiana line with a population of around 4,488 people. Crossett, unfortunately, experiences a decline in population annually and has not seen increase in population since 1980. Quinn Chapel is located on the outskirts of town. The church is located off a main highway but is not in

proximity of any homes and businesses within a seven-to-ten-mile radius. Quinn Chapel is a small congregation of approximately twenty-five to thirty members. After much hard work and dedication, the faithful few members of Quinn Chapel AME Church began to explore their options of building a new sanctuary and fellowship hall. Under the leadership of Rev. Harvey Foreman; Rev. W. P. Muldrew, Presiding Elder of the Hamburg District; the Right Rev. J. D. Bright built a new sanctuary, and fellowship hall. The blueprint for the church was drawn by Robert Duckworth. The cost of building the church was \$11,000. One acre of land was purchased for the church grounds. Later in the 1990s the church purchased an additional two acres of land connected to the church grounds. During this time Quinn Chapel had been appointed a new pastor, the Rev. Artis L. Owens. Rev. Owens kept the church growing and was loved by the community and church family. After many years of pastoring, Rev. Owens was forced to retire in 2008 after a new mandatory retirement policy was passed in the AME book of discipline. The years to come brought about a lot of change in leadership for the Quinn Chapel Church Family. Quinn Chapel became the training church for young preachers who were new to the itinerant ministry.

As when the church was first started, most of the members are related in some way. The membership is all over the age of fifty-five and have been attending the church since they were children. Most of them do not use technology and do not own cell phones. They communicate best by making phone calls or receiving snail mail. The pandemic was very difficult for them, because for the first time they had to call into a virtual service. They look forward to Bible study and Sunday worship to enjoy a word and visit with family and friends. The membership is mostly retired and living on a fixed

income. Despite their retired status, they work tirelessly to serve the church and support richly in tithes and offerings. I have aspired to gain new membership, especially in the younger age group, but they do not care for the AME tradition and order of service.

Despite being small, Quinn remains very active in the community by assisting with charity events, donating to local pantries, nursing home, and meeting the everyday needs of the community. Quinn Chapel AME Church has a rich history and long standing with the community of Crossett. The members are wise in age and still willing to give their best.

Ministry Journey

I was born and raised in Crossett, Arkansas, a small town of a population a little over four thousand people. I was born in 1995 to Brenda Lynn Strebeck and Raymond Canley. My mom died from drug and alcohol abuse when I was five years old. My Dad was very patient with me and really gave me time to move forward. My Dad has been my biggest hero. He has literally been with me every step of the way. He is the strongest man that I know. Being a single Dad, he raised all my siblings by himself. He has dealt with the grief of losing my sister's mother along with losing my mother and remained committed to giving us the best life possible. He always put our needs before his and went above and beyond to give us what he did not have growing up as a child. My Dad never completed school past the fourth grade and began working and helping his mother provide for the family. He forced me to take school seriously and never allowed me to bring home anything less than an A. Through all my ups and downs he has been there through it all. My Dad worked nonstop, and I basically raised myself, but that was the

norm. Out of this I believe its where I developed my stubborn independent ways. It was an everyday habit for me to wake up and get myself dressed, go to school, come home, and get myself ready for bed.

I became very ambitious about my goals and was determined more than ever to be great at everything I did. I struggled tremendously with perfectionism. Before my teenage years, I started to get serious about my faith and my walk with God. I started seeking refuge in God and found church to be my safe place. My grandmother was also impactful in the life of my ministry. She was a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church for her entire life. My grandfather did not regularly attend church and my grandmother never learned to drive, but she still found a way to get to church every Sunday. When none of my other family members attended church, she was always there to support and encourage me to stay in church and remain faithful in my walk with God. I was heavily involved in my church and tried to lead in our youth department. I began to grow in my walk with the Lord and my understanding of the word. I started teaching Bible study and Church School and enjoyed it. It was life-changing for me, and those around me affirmed it. I felt God strongly in such a way that I began to walk out my call story at the age of twelve. I heard God's voice, and it was clear that God had a call on my life to preach and share the gospel among the generations to come. I started spending time with my pastor to perfect my gift and really take part in searching my heart, thoughts, and agenda to make sure it was pure and genuine. I publicly accepted my call to preach and began my itinerant process in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This was new for the church; they had not experienced someone so young with a call and a

gift to preach. It was almost a matter of “so what do we do with her” situation when it came to my ministry.

My ministry journey is very significant in who I am today. My pastor requested that I be licensed to preach. This process consisted of the Presiding Elder and church boards going through a series of questions and deciding for it to take place. Before the process could take place, I was denied by the Presiding Elder immediately. He said there would be no way he would license someone so young. My pastor fought against the Presiding Elder’s decision but was unsuccessful. My pastor had decided to let me preach regularly. Then, I started to travel a lot to preach for other ministries. Finally, the Presiding Elder came to see it for himself. After the service, he decided he would at least allow me the opportunity to be examined by the board. That following Monday, the meeting was held, the vote was unanimous, and they desired to license and admit me into the conference. I had finally received my license to preach.

During my senior year of high school, I received several academic and choir scholarships to a variety of public and private universities. I was really torn between my decision of attending a public university, a historically black university, or a private university. I began to factor in cost, location, major options, and the opinions of others. I had finally decided to attend University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). It was still close to home and tuition was covered at 100%. I was going to major in Business and had been invited to be a part of the Chancellor’s leadership program. I was content with my decision, but I still did not feel right about the decision. One day I got an interest packet in the mail from Oral Roberts University (ORU) in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The AME Church had a conference there before and I was somewhat familiar with its history. I began to

gravitate towards ORU over my decision to attend UALR. I reached out to one of my mentors about my interest in ORU, who knew a former AME pastor who was the Dean of Spiritual Life at ORU. We connected, and I decided to apply for admission right before graduation. My Dad and I drove to Tulsa, and I immediately fell in love with the campus, staff, and spirit-empowered atmosphere. I got the news that I received a significant amount of scholarship money, considered student loans for the rest, and immediately felt like it was the place God wanted me to be. During the remainder of the summer, I researched various majors and took several quizzes to help me choose a major. I knew I was called to ministry, but I also knew God had gifted me in more ways than one, and I wanted to explore secular options. I narrowed it down to social work, business, and communication. After reaching out to each department at ORU, I finally made the decision that pursuing a communication degree was the perfect fit.

After graduating from high school and attending college at Oral Roberts University, I began my four-year process of the Board of Examiners in the AME Church. I was truly surrounded by people who encouraged, supported, and called me out. I gained lifelong friends and amazing professors who turned into mentors. The opportunity I am most proud of was serving as a floor chaplain. I served as a chaplain on the non-traditional floor, women ages twenty-six to sixty plus. I grew a lot in this role because I was constantly working in crisis situations. Unfortunately, some days were harder than others. One of the girls on my floor committed suicide during the Spring semester and it was my job to help encourage and uplift them through this trying moment. We got through it together. I was able to create a strong bond with the women on my floor so much that they followed me to my next floor assignment until I graduated.

This experienced also stretched me a lot because for the first time I was working closely with women that I did not have an existing relationship. The significance of not having a mother growing up started to show up in my flaws as a leader. I was tough and did not show much emotion. I avoided physical touch, and never shared too much information. I was still struggling with my perfectionism and the hustler attitude that I graduated a year early. I always took the maximum credits allowed and took summer courses every summer.

Dr. Clarence Boyd was my boss at ORU when I worked as a student worker and assisted him with the Timothy Mentoring Group. He really prepared me for the culture of ORU. He created opportunities for me around campus that would enhance my gifts and talents. He was another set of eyes and ears for my family. He is also the person that I can call when I do not care to share with others what maybe going on in my life. He was the reason I attended ORU for both undergrad and graduate degrees.

Professor Kerry Loescher, my Youth and Family Ministries Chair was very impactful as she became a strong female voice in my life. She was always a phone call away. I remember losing my grandmother my freshman year of college and I immediately started to crawl into a state of depression. I had not told anyone, but she noticed and invited me to coffee. She prayed for me; she did life with me; she walked along side of me in my grieving process without any hesitation.

Graduation was approaching and I had no idea what my next move was going to be. I had gotten ordained as an itinerant deacon, and my bishop was expecting me to step into a pastoral role, but I just was not ready. I had gotten the opportunity to work in a news station but that was not of interest to me. I continued to pray, asking God to open a

door that was just for me. A week before graduation, I was approached by the Director of Spiritual Life, which gave me the opportunity to serve as the Graduate Assistant of the Oral Roberts University (ORU) Chaplain Leadership Program.

In this position I had the opportunity to oversee chaplains, help with campus life projects, pick incoming chaplains, and commission chaplains that were graduating. It was the perfect position and I gladly accepted. I served the program tirelessly because I loved our program, and I was committed to pouring into the next generation of leaders. I was thriving and building meaningful relationships while pursuing my graduate degree. At twenty-six years old, I can honestly say that I am proud of who I have become, but I also recognize that I am still becoming. I have grown spiritually over the years. I have always been serious about my relationship with the Lord, but I have grown closer to Him over the past few years. Covid has been inconvenient, but it has taught me the importance of spending time in the quiet place.

Over the past few years, God has been showing me what it looks like to be a good steward with what God has given me. When I thought of stewardship, I automatically thought money. Little did I know that God was taking me through a journey of what it looked like to be a good steward of my time, jobs, family, and people. I have been able to find so much peace and rest to become whole in every area of my life. I had the opportunity to add a few things to my resume. I worked part time during graduate school as a director of operations at a United Methodist church where I handled all day-to-day operational tasks for a congregational size of around a thousand members. I handled offering, billing, special projects, maintenance, and contracts. This was a unique

experience because I was exposed to all aspects of what takes place in a church behind the scenes.

After graduating from college and leaving ORU, I worked as a project manager. I oversaw all communication between cellular companies and the engineers. I was responsible for the clients being happy, mailing out drawings, and finding new jobs. Within five months, I was promoted and offered an opportunity to return to school to study engineering degree. I loved my job, but not enough to return to school for something temporary. I knew that God had me right where I needed to be; however, it was not permanent. At the beginning of the pandemic, the firm began to make major cuts, and I knew I would probably be next. I was the youngest and newest person that worked there, and it made sense to keep the people with longevity. My heart was broken because the thought of starting over seemed unrealistic and challenging. After prayer and consideration, I felt God leading me to move back to Arkansas. Out of all places, Arkansas was the last place I had planned on moving back to.

My father was excited to have me closer to home and did all he could to show his support. I sold all my furniture and decided to move back home. I was devastated, constantly asking myself what I had just done, but I knew God still had a plan. After I sold everything, I moved home and began to work on developing myself personally and professionally. I was committed to improving in every area of my life, even if I did not know what was next. I got a call from the President of our AME College in Little Rock, Arkansas, asking if I would be willing to join their staff as an academic coordinator and adjunct instructor. I knew it would be a challenge considering it was an open-enrollment college, but I was up for it.

I began working at Shorter College. I helped the college train all its faculty and students in a newly purchased learning management system. For the first time, they were using software instead of basic emailing assignments and communication. I also established an alumni mentorship program that connected students with alumni. We saw students connect with professionals in various fields and gain lifelong mentors. I enjoyed teaching and pouring into college students along with life lessons I wish I had known during my collegiate experience. I then received an opportunity to work as the Communication Coordinator for the AME Church. It was an opportunity of a lifetime. I had always advocated for change and the need for more digital communication in the denomination. It also allowed me to continue to serve my church on Sunday mornings. I would not change my professional journey, for it has afforded me priceless opportunities. I have experienced a deep sense of purpose and a new meaning of what it means to minister to individuals whose lives hang in the balance. It has truly been a joy to make an impact in the community that I grew up in. I built strong bonds with people I normally would not connect with. Ministry has pushed me to continue an ongoing process of personal growth. I have been able to take the time to celebrate the accomplishments I am most proud of, big and small. While ministry has its ups and downs, the journey has been fulfilling.

The experiences and people that I witnessed and been privileged to meet has shaped my identity in several ways. Although my story is not perfect, I strongly believe that everything was for a specific purpose designed by God. My journey, more than anything has taught me perseverance. I learned how to push through despite all odds. I remember when I first entered ministry, some did not support me because they felt as

though I had not experienced life enough to help someone else along the way. In God's own way he allowed me to strategically go through all my circumstance to show someone else that it can be done. I owe the world to the people who have constantly supported and pushed me through my worst seasons. God had been writing my story all along, and even bitter at times, there were very sweet moments that are life lasting. Everyone has a story, and that is usually what makes them who they are. I was able to try therapy and became a strong advocate for it when it had been something in the past that I was not accustomed to. Overall, God has placed me in the right season, with the right people, at the right time.

I started pastoring last Easter. It was not something I had planned on doing anytime soon, but I knew I was in the right place at the right time. I learned about my members and their expectations. Some expect a lot, and some not so much, but I have worked hard to shepherd them accordingly. It has not been an easy task, but it has been well worth it. I grew much stronger in my face-to-face, one-on-one approach to ministry beyond the pulpit. What came as a surprise truly became an unexplainable love. The common theme I saw throughout my spiritual autobiography was centered around age. I noticed I accomplished many things at a young age. I have always been motivated and passionate about whatever I have set out to do. However, my age has also become an obstacle at times. Several experiences led me to feel overlooked and dismissed because of my age. I have experienced being asked my age on numerous occasions, whether it was in meetings, interview follow-up appointments, or by random individuals in an airport or department store. I had no idea how my age would become a stumbling block when I began pastoring. It was obvious that I was the youngest pastor that they had ever had. I was the youngest pastor they had ever had, but the congregation had watched me grow up

as a child and matriculate through college. It was also my first-year pastoring, and I knew it would be an adventure. I would be called “baby pastor” or be mistaken as the “pastor’s daughter.” This experience has been humbling but rewarding. In that process, I realized that I somehow had to find a way to connect with my congregants who were thirty to fifty years older than me.

I believe a person’s life experiences significantly shape their perspectives on leadership, especially in pastoral ministry. My life experiences have shaped my life in the areas of empathy and my approach to pastoral care. My challenges, triumphs, and relationships have fostered compassion and a sense of relatability in my pastoral ministry. My experiences influenced my preaching style, counseling methods, and overall leadership roles within the church.

The Synergy

With much reflection on my spiritual autobiography and my in-depth contextual analysis, I was able to intertwine the two to identify a need in my current context. Since becoming the Pastor of Quinn Chapel AME Church, there has been a major disconnect between the pastor and the congregation. Over the past ten years, bishops have only appointed young pastors new to the ministry of Quinn Chapel. The members became frustrated over time that they were being overlooked and rejected the opportunity of ever having an experienced and seasoned pastor. Being small, they have adopted a perception that they are undeserving of a pastor who is well of age. It has been difficult for them to connect with the vision and expectations of a pastor between the ages of eighteen to thirty. The congregation found it hard to adapt to change, resulting in pushback and

disagreements concerning finances, order of service, outreach ministries, and annual events. This mindset has resulted in a lack of trust among leadership and members. I think it is crucial for a congregation to feel connected to their senior pastor, especially senior citizens. Church may be their only way of socializing and experiencing a sense of community. The lack of a relationship with a senior pastor could cause a decline in the well-being of the church and attendance. Having a sense of connection with the senior pastor creates trust, unity, and growth. It also helps with getting buy-in and participation when congregations feel a sense of belonging and connectivity from their senior pastor. I believe with pastoral care, guidance, and collaboration, the gap can be closed.

From their perspective, I could see why they would feel a disconnect. In their eyes, for a pastor to be wise and qualified enough, they would have to be of a certain age. They were not interested in my education or the training and exposure I had received. I often tossed and turned about what I could do to persuade them that I had the potential to be their pastor. I spent time looking through the life and lessons of young Timothy in the Bible. It motivated me in such a way that if he could pastor as a possible teenage boy, surely, I could still set an example for my congregation. I studied the three young kings in the Old Testament: King Manasseh (age twelve), King Jehoash (age seven), and King Ahaziah (age sixteen). In the Bible, God often used young people like David, Joseph, Samuel, Mary, and Daniel to carry out a great purpose. In my experience, young leadership has been frowned upon in traditional ministry contexts. Perceptions of young people in leadership roles can vary. Young leaders may lack experience or may be perceived as not having life experiences. Some individuals may question the maturity level of young leaders, associating age with a lack of wisdom and judgment. I believe it is

important to recognize that age alone does not determine leadership effectiveness. Many young leaders bring high energy and a unique perspective to the table. A lack of belief sometimes resides in the millennial generation due to their lack of discipline, study, and consistency. We often get a bad rap for being the instant generation, always wanting things instantly. Being tech-driven, millennials also have a hard time functioning without some type of technology at hand. I do, however, believe that millennials can quickly adjust to change. I believe that our generation strongly values collaboration and diversity.

I believe if participants engage in my curriculum on young leaders in the Bible, then there will be a change in their attitudes toward young leadership within the church. My hypothesis solves the problem of understanding the gap between baby boomer congregants and young pastors. If baby boomer congregants are unable to understand the millennial generation, it could cause more friction, creating a less unified church. I anticipate a change in the attitudes or perspectives of the older generation toward younger leadership. I hope that the change will indicate a move toward a positive view of young leadership in the church. Utilizing pre- and post-surveys, journal entries, and summaries, I will observe findings throughout the project. For eight weeks, participants will participate in a small group series studying young leaders in the Bible and history. I hope to grasp an idea of how participants truly feel about millennial pastors. My expected benefit to the participants would be to identify the pulse of the baby boomers and to provide specific activities to move them closer to a better relationship and appreciation of young pastors.

I am striving to create a stronger connection and unity between millennial pastors and baby-boomer congregants. This is not something I would implement locally but for

all churches attempting to adjust to a young pastor for the first time. It can be a great change from a pastor who is of the baby-boomer congregation to a young millennial pastor. There are several ways to bridge the gap between baby boomer congregants and a millennial pastor. I will keep an open line of communication throughout this process. I will always encourage open and transparent conversation. It is important to observe the differences between both generations and their unique abilities and strengths. Getting to know their values will have a significant impact on how events, services, and sermons are planned. It will be in my best interest to go at a slow pace and not attempt to press or force my need to feel validated or accepted on them. It will be good to implement some new and relevant aspects without alienating the baby boomer congregants. I desire to create an environment for the membership to be open-minded and receptive to this entire process.

While the pastor is pushing for innovation and growth, the church is pushing to maintain its present-day condition. There is a gap between age and church growth. The problem is the church membership has felt as if they have been rejected and overlooked by leadership, therefore creating tension between the pastor and membership because of age and lack of experience. If church leadership and membership participate in a case study about their past experiences with younger pastors these participants will acquire the tools to identify exactly how they feel overlooked and provide feedback regarding their concerns. When the gap is closed between the two intergenerational communities within the church, it enhances a sense of belonging. The goal of this project is to create an understanding, gracious, and collaborative relationship between the pastor and the congregation. This creates a more meaningful sense of engagement within the

church. This project has the potential to strengthen the overall spiritual well-being of the congregation. The overall project will focus on building a bridge and strengthening the pastoral-to-membership relationship between the Millennial Pastor and the Boomer congregation.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The theme of leadership is prominent in 1 Timothy 4:12, but it has presented Timothy as a youth that people may doubt his leadership capability. Paul advised him not to let people undermine him because of his youthful age. The necessity of this advice will be analyzed in this literature, while a comparative analysis will be done with other instances where youths occupied positions of authority. The passage went on to enumerate qualities that Timothy should uphold. This literature also analyzes how these qualities can contribute to effective leadership, even for someone as youthful as Timothy. Secondly, as a follow-up to this passage, Paul also acknowledges Timothy's quality that goes to his mother and grandmother. Paul saw in Timothy a solution for the individuals and churches he could not physically serve.¹ Colossians 3:23 points to the psychology of service. Timothy was urged to follow God's will, become a faithful steward, and provide proper teachings to the church.² The combination of these three passages forms a wholesome instruction set for Christian leaders with an emphasis on the youth. Timothy's youth undoubtedly benefited him, giving him the enthusiasm and energy, he required to

¹ Robert W. Yarbrough and Walter A. Elwell, *Encountering the New Testament (Encountering Biblical Studies): A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 543-551.

² David A. Ackerman, *First and Second Timothy Titus: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2016), 67.

lead his congregants. To this, Timothy is commissioned by Paul that God's blessing of "grace, mercy, and peace," be upon him.³ Yet, it also inevitably led to issues with elderly Christians who would not have readily accepted such a young man's authority due to his inexperience and lack of leadership antecedents. Paul wanted Timothy to be an instance of steadfast faith and a clear conscience, to live a life above contempt, and to use the spiritual abilities God has placed in him as recorded in proceeding verses to 1 Timothy 4:12. Paul was certain that Timothy as a young man may not find such a mission to be simple. Paul, therefore, urged Timothy to "fight the good fight" on two separate occasions. The first instance was in 1 Timothy 1:18, where he referenced prophecies that connected to Timothy in a way that would require courage, so he charged him to "war a good warfare." Timothy is called to "fight the good fight" by remaining true to the "glorious gospel of the blessed God."⁴ For convenience, it can be adduced that his age was still a major contention.

The Passage's Context of Youthfulness (Was Timothy a Boy?)

Timothy was youthful when he met Paul; to categorize his youthfulness, he is described as "young, timid, and easily despised."⁵ Paul urges Timothy to lead with the intent to rely only on scripture, exhortation, and the true doctrine of public worship.⁶

³ Robert Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2018), 109.

⁴ Anetta Huizenga, *Wisdom Commentary: 1-2 Timothy, Titus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 7.

⁵ Luke Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, NY: Double Day, 2001), 91-97.

⁶ Andreas Köstenberger, *The Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation Commentary: Commentary on 1-2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing, 2017), 153.

While the idea that Timothy was a teenager can be alluring, given how much credence it lends to the context of 1 Timothy 4:12 text, it is crucial to compare the text of the many translations or versions of that verse.

The King James Version (KJV) and the New International Version used the term “disciples” in Acts 16:1, sidestepping the context of age in the text. The verses instantiate the family conditions Timothy was not circumcised and how he was subsequently circumcised by Paul. By including the narratives of his family, and specifically his mother, the text of that passage created a consciousness of the possibility that Timothy was still under the guidance of his mother. It takes a particular level of youthfulness for one to be under the guidance of one’s mother. The kind of youthfulness that would exude “Boyish Playfulness.”⁷

It is important to note that this version did not use the text, “disciple,” as found in the King James Version, New International Version, and the Amplified Version. The version used the Jewish word “Talmid,” which translates to disciple. However, there is a pointer to Timothy’s youthfulness considering the prominence of his mother in the description. The Bible’s system of genealogy has been characterized by paternal chronology.⁸ This instance can be found in the Book of Genesis, Chronicles, and other books where lineages are established. However, the argument that Timothy’s father was not a Jew, and his role was not central to the discourse, so his absence in the supposed genealogy does not depict age band, is not ignored.

⁷ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, 2014), 390.

⁸ Daniel Boyarin, “Paul and the Genealogy of Gender,” *Representations* 41 (January 1993): 1-33.

The concept that the passage's reference to Timothy's mother hints at his youthfulness is confirmed by previous instances. In the story of Isaac's marriage, Genesis 24:67 reads: "Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah." It can be observed that Sarah was prominent in this passage, and the activity was centered on youthfulness, which was about Isaac getting married.⁹ Similarly, the story of Samuel's dedication to priestly service, as provided in 1 Samuel 2:18-19 held Hannah prominently because of the role she played in Samuel's dedication and clearly stated that Samuel was a child. Another instance is the story of Jesus with the Rabbis during the annual feast of the Passover. St. Luke 2:41-52 narrates the story of Jesus Christ as a little boy who left his parents and was found three days later, sitting among the Rabbis. In verse forty-eight of the passage, Jesus' mother's role was prominent.

Mary experienced divine motherhood, giving birth to Jesus Christ, the primary narrative of all biblical births.¹⁰ When these instances are juxtaposed with the story of Jesus Christ when he was about to begin his ministry, it becomes clear the distinctions in the relationship and significance of the mother in the narrations about her son, regarding his age. In Luke 8:19-21, the passage narrated the instance when the mother of Jesus and his brothers came to look for him. His response in that passage made it clear that he has reached maturity and would not be subjected to the whims of his family. According to *The New International Biblical Commentary on Matthew 12:46-50*, though his response did not lack respect, it established what was important to his ministry, which is his divine

⁹ Dianne Bergant, *Genesis: In the Beginning* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 95-102, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/11232256>.

¹⁰ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke: Volume I* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 120-123.

assignment above earthly parental ties.¹¹ Secondly, when Jesus, as a guest in the marriage in Galilee, the host had exhausted the supply of wine, Mary who was concerned about the unfortunate situation approached Jesus to save the situation. Jesus, in definite answer, informed his mother that there was an appointed time for actions of this manner to be executed. He did not yield to the social or cultural pressure of acting in a manner that pleases a parent. This reaction was executed when he was considered mature.

Therefore, the Bible in the primary passage, 1 Timothy 4:12, and Acts 16:1-3 as the referenced passage suggests that Timothy was a young adult. In this manner, the textual content of the verse can be analyzed on the premise that Paul needed to encourage Timothy to be firm and value his calling, even though he is young and may not be taken seriously by those who are older or expect to be led by older people.

Youths and Leadership Positions in the Old Testament Bible

The Bible has recorded the reigns of different kings, and in some instances assessed their rule or provided the necessary information for one to decide if they were effective leaders. This section of the chapter will evaluate several young kings including King Manasseh, King Jehoshaphat, and King Ahaziah.

King Manasseh - Age Twelve

The Bible gives the account of King Manasseh, who ascended the throne when he was twelve years old at the death of his father, King Hezekiah, in the thirty-third chapter

¹¹ Robert Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 122-123.

of the Second Book of Chronicles. King Manasseh was an idolater who rebelled against God and embraced everything paganism. Manasseh was promiscuous; he committed murder, engaged in every kind of immorality and wickedness known to man, dedicated himself to sorcery, and even offered his sons as sacrifices to a deity of the heathens.

As a confirmation of the earlier stated claim, in a parallel verse in Isaiah 62:4, his mother, Hephzibah, meaning “in whom I delight,” is mentioned.¹² This shows that mothers are prominent in narratives about younger people in the Bible. Manasseh was the target of God’s wrath. He was transported to Babylon while ensnared in chains. Yet his narrative is not over there. Manasseh started praying while the Tyrant monarch had time to reflect while imprisoned in the dungeon. This guy called out to God for atonement even though he ought to be condemned to damnation, and God heard him. The Bible stated in 2 Chronicles 33:3 that Manasseh went on to build the same high places that his father, King Hezekiah, had torn down. Subsequent verses enumerated other ills he meted against God and the children of Israel, the punishment he received, and the forgiveness he received after repenting from his wrong deeds.

King Jehoash – Aged Seven

The Bible also tells the story of King Jehoash, who was the eighth king of Judah and the only son of Ahaziah to survive the royal household slaughter that his grandmother Athaliah had arranged. King Jehoash is also referred to as Joash in the King James Version. He had Zibiah of Beersheba as his mother. According to 2 Kings 12:1 and 2 Chronicles 24:1, Jehoash’s ascendancy started when he was seven years old and lasted

¹² T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Kings* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 304-305.

for forty years. According to 2 Chronicles 24:2, he was regarded as a righteous leader during the time of Jehoiada the priest; however, after Jehoiada's passing, in 2 Chronicles 24:17–19, he turned away from his adherence to God. While the Bible recorded his early reign to be righteous, which can be associated with his youthful age, the later duration was characterized by wrong decisions. However, it is noteworthy that his righteous reign was associated with the presence of Jehoiada the priest. Jehoiada was entrusted with choosing the wives of King Jehoash, which resulted in the birth of many children.¹³ He could have been a bad king, right from the onset, if Jehoiada was not there.

King Ahaziah – Aged Sixteen

King Ahaziah, referred to as King Uzziah was a King in Judah whose ascendancy was sixteen. He was four years older than King Manasseh and nine years older than King Jehoash when they ascended the throne. According to 2 Chronicles 26:1, King Uzziah became a king after his father was murdered. Unlike the previously mentioned Kings, different passages of the Bible cited him as a righteous king. In the years of Zechariah, who knew God's revelations, King Uzziah performed what was acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, and he followed God. One of the most fruitful and fortunate kingships in the history of Judah was that of his. He conquered many nations at the instance of the Lord. He dedicated himself to expanding his realm; he erected towns, towers, and other structures. He fortified Jerusalem, and he amassed a powerful army. He was struck with leprosy after daring the ordinance of God in verse nineteen of the passage. In verse

¹³ W. Corduan, and M. Anders, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: 1st and 2nd Chronicles* (Nashville, TN: Boardman and Holman Publishers, 2004), 307.

sixteen of chapter twenty-six, King Uzziah became so prideful that he was in “violation of the sphere of the holy.”¹⁴

Analysis

The synthesis of this section is to understand how biblical leadership instances were affected by age. The first instance was of King Manasseh who was twelve at the point of ascendancy. He was a tyrannical king, as recorded in the related passage. Though he turned from his ways in the later years of his reign, it was at an older age, considering he reigned for fifty-five years. King Jehoshaphat ruled righteously, having ascended at the age of seven, but became tyrannical in the later part of his reign. However, the end of his righteous rule was characterized by the death of Jehoiada the priest. This consideration brings the doubt that he could have been a good king without Jehoiada. King Ahaziah was the oldest of them, but relatively young for the responsibility of a king ruled righteously and efficiently and only fell into the snare of pride in his later age. These examples provide the premise that the people may not have had a good experience with the rule of young people, which triggers Paul’s concern to encourage Timothy to be resolute in his calling, despite his age.

The Secular Context Youths in Leadership Positions

Considering that people have tried to commit to leadership responsibility, both in the church and the secular world, the perception of their capacity by associates or the

¹⁴ William Johnstone, *First and Second Chronicles: Volume 2: 2 Chronicles 10-36: Guilt and Atonement* (London, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 166.

people to be led can be hinged on factors like experience and age. Recent labor surveys indicate that young people are becoming less willing to assume leadership roles. The results demonstrate that many members of the younger population do not think it is worthwhile to battle for organizational goals and expectations. Not minding their age, leaders today face enormous responsibilities in the workplace, according to recent studies.¹⁵ Many criticisms center on lengthy hours, increased expectations, and the challenge of getting sufficient time for rest and personal affairs. Being a young manager or leader means that in addition to gaining new skills, one must also create his or her sense of who he or she is as a leader, which implies that one should be able to assume the status before anyone's perception becomes an issue of concern. This identity develops because of interactions with those in leadership roles across many social circumstances.¹⁶

Contending with Cultural Practices

Every business has a unique culture developed over time because of the actions, choices, and interactions of its leaders and employees.¹⁷ This company culture has the potential to be both a great advantage and a terrible problem. Young managers' encounters in business administration where they had to promote change within businesses serve as an example. Understanding the benefits and drawbacks of its underlying culture takes a lot of work. The change manager will benefit from having this knowledge as they plan

¹⁵ Katherine Louise Yeager, "Leader Identity Development: Understanding Adolescent Practice Experiences of Future Organizational Leaders," Core.ac.uk, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/18599633.pdf>.

¹⁶ Yeager, "Leader Identity Development," <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/18599633.pdf>.

¹⁷ Otacilio Torres Vilas-Boas, Eduardo Paes Davel, and Marcelo De Bispo, "Leadership as Cultural Practice," *Revista De Administração Mackenzie* 19, no. 1 (May 2018).

any transition process, lessen culture shock, and prepare for resistance to any changes.¹⁸

Those in this group are often assumed to be older, better educated, and more experienced than Timothy, but it does not lessen the gravity of the task that was placed in front of him. The issue of culture is seen to be dominant in the context of Timothy's leadership. Paul had already perceived the cultural norm, and he felt that it might rouse difficulties for him, hence the encouragement.

Contending with Internal Conflicts like Ego

Young leaders who have achieved success rapidly may forget they do not have all the answers or are always right. Ego would provide special challenges that may divert the leader's career path. Senior management professionals realize the importance of practicing humility and having the capacity to learn, which can make things simpler and open tremendous opportunities for their professional development.¹⁹ With a certain amount of power, leadership has proved to be a challenging task. Considering what English Catholic historian John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton wrote in a letter to an Anglican bishop in 1887; "Absolute power corrupts absolutely, and power tends to corrupt. Almost usually, great men are evil men."²⁰ This line of thought is confirmed in the disposition of King Ahaziah who became affluent and was struck with leprosy by God

¹⁸ O. T. Vilas-Boas, E. P. B. Davel, and M. de S. Bispo, "Leadership as Cultural Practice," Scielo, <https://www.scielo.br/j/ram/a/x5Vxk9NBzB3XtRZ8BqNJrDJ/?format=pdf&lang=en>.

¹⁹ O. T. Vilas-Boas, E. P. B. Davel, and M. de S. Bispo, "Leadership as Cultural Practice," Scielo, <https://www.scielo.br/j/ram/a/x5Vxk9NBzB3XtRZ8BqNJrDJ/?format=pdf&lang=en>.

²⁰ Chandra Sekhar, Manoj Patwardhan, and Rohit Kr. Singh, "A Literature Review on Motivation," *Global Business Perspectives* 1, no. 4 (2013): 471-487.

because of his ego. This issue seemed to be a concern to Paul, considering that he included charity in the virtues that Timothy should uphold in his dealings.

Excessive Motivation to Impress

Young leaders feel pressure to live up to expectations even though they are still in the early stages of their careers. They are nearly panicked by the duty that lies ahead of them. On this account, they try to project a sense of assurance that should win them the necessary respect or cooperation to perform the tasks.²¹ It is important that children and teenagers understand that information alone will not get the job done. They also need the capacity to convey to others that they can do the job. It is known that there is a link between this pressure and the desire to impress. Young leaders must decide and consider the potential long-term effects of their choices and actions.²² It is essential that any commitment made to the parties engaged in a business be both attainable and sustained. One's career as well as any confidence in one's leadership abilities might be negatively impacted by a single subpar deliverable.²³ When Paul said in the passage that Timothy set an example of a believer in speech and conversation, he seemed to be aware of existence of these internal conflicts in Timothy. The words of a leader must be meaningful and within the confines of their ability.

²¹Sekhar, Patwardhan, and Singh, "A Literature Review on Motivation," 471-487.

²² Sekhar, Patwardhan, and Singh, "A Literature Review on Motivation," 471-487.

²³ Miguel Melendro, Gema Campos, Ana Eva Rodriguez-Bravo, and Delia Arroyo Resino, "Young People's Autonomy and Psychological Well-Being in the Transition to Adulthood: A Pathway Analysis," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (July 2020).

Youth and Leadership in the Church

For one cause or another, many people have sought out leadership roles in the Church to obtain notoriety and support. Yet any sincere Christian would do well to observe the teachings according to Paul's epistle to Timothy, which applies to all potential disciples and leaders in God's Church. Timothy served as Paul's apostolic representative after he left him in various locations to execute responsibilities on his behalf and finish establishing the churches he assisted in founding. Timothy was to continue educating the churches and assist in electing elders to lead and care for the members. Given his youth in comparison to some of the people he was expected to lead, Timothy may have already communicated with Paul about this matter. Paul advised Timothy to ignore his age and the opinions of others and concentrate on living his life as an inspiration for everybody who recognized it for what it was and joined him.

Textual Theme of the Verse

Paul made a list of characteristics Timothy should uphold in his administration of the church at Ephesus. These characteristics, Paul believed, would guide Timothy across the difficulties encountered while leading the flock. Some of the characteristics, as listed in the verse, are word management, believer-oriented conversation, charity, showing example in spirit, faith, and purity.

Word Management

At this point, it is important to consider what the Bible says about the tongue. This consideration is mainly limited to a choice of words. Words are the product of the

tongue, and they can bless or curse. Psalm 19:14 was the prayer of the psalmist who knew the efficacy of words and needed the grace of God to be in control of his words. It reads, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Ps. 19:14). *Calvin’s Commentary* framed the text of the passage to imply that David pleaded with God to conform his speech and heart to the obedience of his rule in addition to forbidding him from engaging in overt acts of transgression.²⁴ Considering that the Lord abhors evil, words that are fashioned after evil cannot be acceptable in God’s sight. Setting anger as precedence in our choice of words, it can be said that an angered leader may use the type of words that are not acceptable before God, and it may also have an adverse effect on the followers. Word management is emphasized in that verse, considering its essence in leadership, even for Timothy as a youth. As stated in Proverbs 21:23, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”

Believer-Oriented Conversation

Conversations are day-to-day; people are engaged in the range of issues to converse on is broad. The Christian leader, however, is limited to a controlled range, which is believer-oriented. Some of the social and religious vices are executed within this space, and they include backbiting, mudslinging, jesting, and other adverse issues that are executed to interact with words. The text shows that Paul prioritizes this characteristic as important in the effective leadership of the flock. There are a series of instances where

²⁴ John Calvin, “1 Timothy 4 Calvin’s Commentaries,” Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/Psalm/19.htm>.

the Bible has instructed us on how to frame conversations and some of the conversations, we should not be involved in. Psalm chapter two creates an instant conversation that should be avoided by believers. In verse two, it condemned taking counsel against the Lord. Psalms chapter one has already advised us not to sit in the seat of the scornful. Paul knew these conversations, scornful once and conspiracy among others are not worthy of a Christian leader.

Being an Example in Spirit

The word "example" in the spiritual sense relates to our behavior or mindset toward God and one another.²⁵ Some Christians are cold and heartless, while others are fervent and impassioned. Some Christians are apathetic or lukewarm. Even while dispositions may seem unimportant to us, God cares about them and wants Christian leaders to set a good example for others. Galatians 5:22-23 enumerated the fruits of the spirit, which range from love to temperance as arranged in the passage. All these qualities are our expressions towards one another. Each of these virtues can be seen to be efficient leadership qualities, and it is consistent with the attributes Timothy needed to administer his responsibilities, even as a youth.

Being an Example in Expression of Faith

Faith holds the central theme of Christianity. Considering that Hebrew 11:6 clearly states that no one is capable of pleasing God without faith, one could be tempted

²⁵ Joseph Benson, *Joseph Benson's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (New York, NY: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet, 1846), 641.

to ask if there is anything more important than pleasing God. Going a bit further to define faith from the Hebrew context, 11:1 state that faith is the tangibility of things we build in our mind as expectations and proof of “God.” Faith is what we have not seen. We have not seen him, yet we believe, and we believe so much that we are convinced like one who has proof. Reconciling this with the previous definition, it is obvious that one may not exhibit this tendency if there is no intangible evidence that God exists and requires us to do these. The second verse of Hebrew chapter eleven states that the elders obtained good reports for showing faith, one of which was Abraham. *Benson’s Commentary* interpreted the word “elders” in that passage to be “forefathers.”²⁶ His faith was counted for righteousness. When a leader shows faith, aside from showing the fruit of the spirit to the people, he can obtain a good report from his followers, which is good for his assignment. Paul wanted this for Timothy.

Being an Example of Purity

Purity is simply a sinless state. While this is difficult to imagine, regarding the ability to live without sin, God has provided a mechanism for us to be renewed. Isaiah 64:6 has presented our physical effort towards righteousness to be worthless. However, Christ has given us an option through 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Cleansing us from all our unrighteousness would imply that we would be righteous, and by extension, pure. When Paul includes purity among the list of characteristics that Timothy should uphold in his responsibilities, it would imply that he needs to be aware of his imperfect

²⁶ Joseph Benson, *Joseph Benson’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (New York, NY: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet, 1846), 342.

nature, after his physical effort to maintain sanctity. This will be his service to the Lord and a legacy or example to the flocks.

The Theme of Steadfastness in 2 Timothy 1:5

As an adjoining passage to the contexts stated in 1 Timothy 4:12, one can easily note the similarities between them. While 1 Timothy 4:12 emphasized the context of teaching, considering that Paul was listing out the values or characteristics he wanted Timothy to uphold in the administration of his duties, 2 Timothy was a chance for Paul to state the in-depth qualities he noticed that seemed consistent with his family. While the textual representation has shown “Faith” as the word, it speaks to the concept of steadfastness. All the different translations of the Bible had stuck to the word “Faith.” Looking at the meaning of steadfastness, the Merriam-Webster dictionary has defined it to be “firm in belief, determination, or adherence” while giving its synonym as “loyal.” This would imply that if something is consistent about somebody, the person can be regarded as steadfast. What seemed to have been consistent with Timothy, as stated by Paul, is faith, considering that he found it in Timothy’s grandmother Lois, mother Eunice, and in Timothy, who expressed it by following him as shown in Acts 16:2.

Leaving everything behind seems to be a great deal in the expression of faith. The theme of steadfastness holds similarities with the sacrifices of Jeremiah (Smith), which is depicted in his agonies. Abraham who had only one son with Sarah, and was in her old age, was ready to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God. While Abraham was a rich man, considering he had slaves and an army, giving up Isaac was more like giving up all he had, and God counted that disposition as righteousness. The same instance was recorded

for Timothy who left his family as a young man and followed Paul. However, the context of steadfastness becomes paramount. While it can be argued that his mother and grandmother's faith should not be counted for him, thereby putting off the instance of steadfastness in his favor. However, the family has maintained a trend that he has inherited, just like Mephibosheth inherited the goodwill of his father, Jonathan, from David in 2 Samuel 9:7. Therefore, there is a need to analyze how this quality fits into the assignment that stands before him.

It is important to note that the second letter to Timothy came after he had been leading the church at Ephesus for a while. Similar to previous crises in the majority of important human endeavors, the leadership crisis is a result of a failure to put the knowledge and ideas already in existence into effect.²⁷ In addition, the assumption put forth by the majority of advocates of leadership theories that by teaching leaders what management is their responsibility, the leaders will invariably use the knowledge and skills obtained to influence their devotees and community, does not hold up under close examination. There is a disconnect between leadership theory and practice, which means certain components are needed to effectively apply leadership ideas, knowledge, and abilities. Steadfastness is a quality that could give the confidence that leaders can implement the necessary actions in the interest of their followers.

Previous leaders in the Bible have shown in multiple instances how competent they can be, among other characteristics for which they were considered fit for leadership. David shepherded his flock into the wilderness and protected it against wild

²⁷ Emmanuel Mango, "Rethinking Leadership Theories," *Open Journal of Leadership* 7, no. 1 (2018): 57-88.

animals. He stated that he went after wild animals that picked his lamb, killed it, and returned the lamb to the flock, as stated in 1 Samuel 17:34-35. The consistency in protecting his flock, even in the face of danger, translates to steadfastness. Keil and *Delitzsch's Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* emphasized Saul's doubt in David's ability to face their enemy. However, David solved his puzzle with the steadfastness of his care for his sheep.²⁸ Steadfastness becomes an asset in leadership because the followers can be confident that the leader is not going to bail in the face of strife. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul, having committed to memory the steadfastness of Timothy, went on in the proceeding verse encouraging him to activate the gift of God in him due to his anointing. At this point, it is obvious that the anointing has settled on Timothy's steadfastness. Considering the claim that it was a few days to his execution, Paul's awareness of this imminent event was reflected in the proceeding texts.

The Theme of Leadership Service in Colossians 3:23

Leadership tends to mean a lot of things to many people, and among them can be authority, privileges, and in the political context, a level of immunity. While all these could be opportunities to enable seamless efficiency for the leader, the high point of leadership is service.²⁹ The Book of Colossians 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the lord, and not unto men." When one is admonished to execute a task heartily, it would not be out of place to feel that something uninteresting about the task

²⁸ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, "1 Samuel 17 Keil and Delitzsch Old Testament Commentary," Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/kad/1_Samuel/17.htm, 1 Samuel 17.

²⁹ Volker Kessler and Louise Kretzschmar, "Christian Leadership as a Trans-Disciplinary Field of Study," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 36, no. 1 (2015).

can cause one to act grudgingly. However, the passage has emphasized that whatever the reason might be that one should be begrudged in his or her service, it should be done heartily as to God, not to men. This passage leaves much to consider in things that could make leadership a begrudging experience.

The Bible has not promised or indicated that the Christian race will be an interesting experience. In John 16:33, Jesus Christ said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” As a matter of fact, according to the passage, Christ has informed Christians that the journey will be tough and that they should take into consideration all he has told them to achieve peace. The *Geneva Study Bible* provided an analysis of this passage that included an emphasis on Jesus as the only surety and foundation of the Church, implying that the storms that Christians would face can only be stemmed by Jesus. It would not be a smooth ride.³⁰ When juxtaposed with the text in Colossians 3:23, a lot of questions are answered. Starting from the reason why one must be encouraged to execute tasks heartily, one can be sure that challenging times will come. Secondly, when John 16:33 hints at the peace that Christians will find in Christ for all their tribulation, the instance of doing it “as to the Lord, and not unto men” becomes clearer. This passage emphasizes the peace that the leader or the laborer will find in Jesus Christ for all the tribulations he faced. While this Epistle of Paul was not directed to Timothy, but to the church in Colosse as indicated in Colossians 1:1-2, the passage gives more credence to the qualities of a Christian leader.

³⁰ R. C. Sproul and Bruce K. Waltke, “John 16 Geneva Study Bible,” BibleHub, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gsb/John/16.htm>.

Leadership as Our Race in Christianity

Timothy's assignment was to lead the flock in Ephesus and to ensure that they grew in the knowledge of God, considering that they were all new in the faith. However, this seems to be our general responsibility in the Christian faith to lead others to Christ. While we take up the mission that Jesus Christ has given us, as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20, which says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." We tend to play the leadership role that was committed to Timothy. To confirm this claim, the Bible has already committed us to leadership in 1 Peter 2:9, which says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people to show forth the praises of who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Therefore, in our Christian race, which includes making disciples of men and leading them to Christ, we require all the leadership qualities that have been suggested to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, and the encouragement in 2 Timothy 1:5-6. The admonishment in Colossians 3:23 is not left out of the tools we require to function in our Christian race.

As Christians, we need to guide our words carefully so that we do not cause strife in those committed to our care, we need to screen the conversation we engage in. Most importantly, we need to uphold purity, exude the fruits of the spirit, and express our faith in God, so we can be a good example to people who learn from us. While practicing these characteristics, we need to ensure consistency to be qualified for the requirement of steadfastness, and not waiver like chaffs as hinted in Psalm 35:5. Finally, we will need to

serve in our responsibility, heartily, knowing that our services are unto God, and not men, as hinted in Colossians 2:23. *The Wesley Commentary* clarified the responsibility in Matthew 28:19 to include teaching and baptism.³¹ The passages seem to alternate according to the commentary.

Conclusion

Timothy's youth probably served him well since it gave him the zeal and vigor to guide his congregation. Caution was urged with this. He would lead the sheep astray, according to Barnes' analysis of the text, if he wandered. However, it would also unavoidably cause problems with senior Christians who, given his youth and lack of prior leadership roles, would not have readily recognized his authority. Paul's advice was valuable to his ministry, even though he was just a young man. Timothy was to be an example of unwavering faith and a clear conscience, live a life beyond contempt, and use the spiritual gifts that God has given him, according to Paul. Paul was convinced that Timothy would not find such a task to be straightforward as a young man. Paul advised Timothy to "fight the good battle" as a result.

When Timothy first met Paul, he was a teenager; *Clarke's Commentary* used "Boyish playfulness" to describe Timothy's youthful nature to the fullest. Second, Barnes' statement implied that Paul would return to him, giving rise to the notion that he was not mature enough to oversee the flocks for all time. Although Timothy's age is not clear in the text, it is easy to assume he was a young guy. Many other instances of the Bible

³¹ John Wesley, "Matthew 28 Wesley's Notes," BibleHub, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/wes/matthew/28.htm>.

confirmed the thoughts that he was significantly very young for the ministry ahead of him. These instances include the prominence of his mother in the narrative of the time Paul met him, which is given credence by other examples that suggest the youthfulness of other Bible characters. These characters included kings and Samuel the priest. Secular instances were used to analyze how people would access the leadership of youth and how believers may perceive youthful leadership from Old Testament antecedents.

The analysis of the Old Testament antecedent presented instances where many youthful kings failed due to their exuberances, while one under the guidance of a priest was recorded to have led a righteous reign up until the priest died. The context of priestly guidance is emphasized in that instance, and it is like the one Paul was providing to Timothy. The possibilities of Timothy's leadership failure would not be very far from a similar instance in the secular world, as some of the characters are alike, as discussed in the Secular Context of Youths in Leadership Positions section. The section highlighted cultural practices, internal conflicts (Ego), and excessive motivation to impress. When these instances are juxtaposed with the admonishment that Paul provided in 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 1:5, and Colossians 3:23, the importance is established.

In a textual analysis of 1 Timothy 4:12, some keywords were highlighted for an efficient explanation. Word management was chosen on the premise that words play a primary role in the life of a leader, and that it was emphasized in the passage. Psalm chapter nineteen was used to show how a leader should handle his or herself regarding his or her use of words. The issue of conversation was also raised in the passage, and this literature coined the "Believer-Oriented Conversation" to emphasize the boundaries of conversation a Christian leader, more importantly, a youthful one, should engage in.

Being an example in spirit, which entails bearing the fruit of the spirit as enumerated in Galatians chapter five, was also included in the textual analysis of the literature. Lastly, the issues of faith and purity were also analyzed. Faith was established as the root of Christianity through which anyone would hope to see God, while purity exemplifies the state of God and his forgiveness, even as we strive towards perfection. We tend to see how steadfastness plays out as consistency in everything worth doing and how leadership translates to our responsibilities in our Christian race.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

In 1847, the Quinn Chapel AME Church, named after Bishop Paul Quinn, successfully sought the AME Church for admission as a congregation and the dispatch of a preacher to serve them. The church is facing an intergenerational crisis between the congregant baby boomers and millennial ministers. If the ministers and congregants participate in an eight-week journey, including Bible study, sermon series, pre- and post-survey, and workshops with guest facilitators, congregants will have the space to share their experiences with millennial pastors.

A trip through the history lane of the church shows that the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was formed when slaves or freed Blacks could not enjoy liberty in the church.¹ The formation of the AME Church is centrally positioned to create a worship center where the blacks can have a sense of dignity. Over the years, the theme and focus of the church have accommodated generational experiences, hence the problem of disconnect between generations of congregants and ministers. An understanding of the historical events and the established goal of the church can create a melting pot for the two generations, which involves focusing on the social, political, educational, and economic gap experienced by the Blacks in contemporary society, as a connection to the

¹ Dennis C. Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church," AME Church, <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>.

roots and establishment of the AME Church. The baby boomers were born about 150 years after the creation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, known as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.² The church transitioned through multiple American events and cultures, which formed the focus of the church for each respective season. An example is the American Civil War, which witnessed the conquering of many Confederate states in the South. The South was notorious for the holding of slaves, and the freedom of slaves was one of the core principles of the war.³ The focus of the African Methodist Church was adapted to evangelism during the war, considering that they had to seek the approval of the Union Army to access the slaves in the conquered Confederate states. While the events of the Civil War created the avenue for expansion into the South, the central theme for the establishment of the church was still consistent with the activities.

The Church's Establishment Goal

The AME Church was birthed with the primary intent to provide dignity for the Black person. This dignity would also be extended to people who were under slavery. Many slaves had the opportunity to encounter Christian ministers who had clear messages against slavery, and they acted to consolidate their messages.⁴ This opportunity was not available to every slave in different plantations across America. However, those

² Clement Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race* (Montgomery, AL: National Publishing Company, Inc., 1919), 546-576.

³ Wesley Pippert, "The Revival of Religion in America," Washington, DC: CQ Press, <https://cqpress.sagepub.com/cqresearcher/report/revival-religion-america-cqresrre1988072200>.

⁴ Dennis C. Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church," AME Church, <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>.

who had the opportunity to worship still had to encounter some forms of resistance or negative reactions, even in the places of worship. After benefitting from the effort of a Methodist minister who had convinced many of the slave owners to free their slaves, the then “Negro Richard,” and his older brother worked to earn his freedom and went on to establish the AME Church in 1787. The Church formed bodies that helped black migrants and enslaved fugitives from the South to settle in Philadelphia. The Church, through Allen’s leadership, also engaged in other involvement like the 1793 Yellow Fever outbreak in Philadelphia by caring for the sick and managing the corpses of the dead.⁵

The British Church During Slavery in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century

There were different points of view in assessing the roles of religion in society and how it affected concepts that were inimical to the well-being of the slaves. It was expected that religion would have been a relief to the downtrodden and lowly. Literature had captured a section of the devotional book *The Whole Duty of Man* but anonymously published in 1658. In this section, the author notes that all servants should offer their masters "diligence, patience, faithfulness, and meekness."⁶ Given that there were no provisions for which these requirements were not necessary. It appeared the terms were chosen in a way that suggests that servants, and in a deeper representation, slaves, are obligated by duty to remain in the state of servitude. Such principles were not always upheld, as seen by the burgesses' need to enact laws in reaction to emancipated servants

⁵ Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 546.

⁶ B. Wolfe, “Indentured Servants in Colonial Virginia,” Encyclopedia, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/indentured-servants-in-colonial-virginia/>.

and those who rented themselves out to other masters while still under obligation to receive better terms.⁷ Statutes were later amended in 1657–1658 mandated employees to carry certificates and penalized erring masters.

In the Exodus of the Europeans into the United States, one of the reasons for this mass movement was hinged on the quest for religious freedom. Religion was institutionalized in most parts of Europe during the eighteenth century and early periods.⁸ This implied that societal and governmental instruments could be used to execute religious doctrines. Individuals or groups that had beliefs that conflicted with the institutionalized perceptions could be executed because of heresy or treason. People with conflicting beliefs saw a move to America as an opportunity to escape the compelling models of Christianity, or religion in general practiced in many European societies. When juxtaposed with other motivations for the mass movement to America, it can be deduced that the desire for freedom of religious practice was one of the major reasons. However, people still needed to fund their transportation and welfare during the journey to America, and indentured servitude was one of the major options to meet their needs, especially among people without sufficient means.

There was an increased need for servants due to the tobacco industry's rapid expansion. Although it provided significant opportunities for intending planters, it was a labor-intensive crop that needed a lot of workers. The yearly tobacco output per hand increased from around 710 pounds to over 1,600 pounds through the 1620s and 1670s, while shipping prices fell.⁹ Planters could grow greater harvests with fewer workers, but

⁷ Wolfe, "Indentured Servants in Colonial Virginia."

⁸ Wolfe, "Indentured Servants in Colonial Virginia."

they still needed more slaves to keep up with rising tobacco use in reaction to decrease pricing. While there are pieces of literature proposing that the 1676 Bacon's Rebellion formed the basis for the intensification of black slavery, considering that it worsened after the rebellion, other pieces of literature point to the increasing need for labor and the associated bias relating to color. However, it became pertinent that the ills of slavery were increasing while the Blacks received the hardest hits.¹⁰ Gradually, Blacks were looked upon in society as potential slaves and lesser humans, even in places of worship.

Establishment of the AME Church

The Free African Society (FAS), founded in Philadelphia in 1787 by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others, gave rise to the AME Church. FAS activists learned of the extent to which American Methodists were willing to go to impose racial segregation towards the Blacks when authorities at St. George's MEC dragged blacks from their knees while they were worshipping.¹¹ So, the St. George's members who were also members of the FAS prepared to convert their mutual assistance organization into an African worship assembly. There was a resolve by many of the people who decided to leave to join the Protestant Episcopal Church. However, Allen organized a small number that stuck with the Methodist faith to form a similar mode of worship.

⁹ Richardson, *The National Cyclopaedia of the Colored Race*, 190-272.

¹⁰ Wolfe, "Indentured Servants in Colonial Virginia."

¹¹ Dennis C. Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church," AME Church, <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>.

Allen served as the preacher when Bethel AME was consecrated in 1794.¹² The members of the Free African Society were freed former slaves who had dedicated their service to emancipating the numerous enslaved people, and their motive was also executed in their reaction against the discriminating treatment meted against them by the officials of the St George Methodist Church.

The Growth Trend

With the leadership of Richard, some members established the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church while retaining its tenets and structure of authority. Allen served as the preacher when Bethel AME was consecrated in 1794. Allen successfully petitioned for Bethel's independence from the white Methodist churches in Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815. Eight clergy members and five churches comprised the church upon its founding. By 1846, it had expanded to 176 clergy, 296 churches, and 17,375 members.¹³ With the help of surrounding AME churches, safe villages like Lima were established, and they occasionally participated in the Underground Railroad. The 20,000 members were mostly in the North in 1856. In 1876, there were 207,000 AME members nationwide, an increase from 70,000 in 1866.

Before the Civil War, the AMEC's spatial reach was mostly limited to the Northeast and Midwest. Substantial fellowships were started in Blacksmith's Shop towns including Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, and others.¹⁴ Several northern areas also saw a significant

¹² Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 121.

¹³ Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church."

increase in AME influence. Surprisingly, AME congregations expanded throughout Maryland, Kentucky, Louisiana, and, briefly, South Carolina, which were known as slave states.¹⁵ At the beginning of the mid-nineteenth century, congregations in Stockton, Sacramento, San Francisco, and other California cities helped the religion spread to the Pacific Coast.

Interestingly, the theme of the church, which was to emancipate black people from racial maltreatment was executed during the Civil War, which saw a tremendous increase in the population of the church during the period. With the approval of Union army leaders, AME preachers entered the states of the disintegrating Confederates to convert freshly liberated slaves to their faith. Theophilus G. Steward's preaching "I Seek My Brethren," which he delivered frequently in South Carolina, served as a resounding cry to convert other black people in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Texas, and many other southern states.¹⁶ The AME's membership grew underneath the Mason-Dixon divide, reaching 400,000 by 1880. The AME now claimed followers on two continents with Bishop Henry M. Turner leading African Methodism in 1891 over the Atlantic into African countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1891 and South Africa in 1896.¹⁷

¹⁴ Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church."

¹⁵ Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church."

¹⁶ Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church."

¹⁷ Dickerson, "Our History: AME Church."

The Life of Richard Allen

Birth, Learning, and Freedom

The life of “Negro Allen” who would later be addressed as Richard Allen by the virtue of his freedom, and much later be referred to as Bishop Richard Allen by the virtue of his ordination, was centered around the scourge of slavery and racial discrimination. The clergyman, author, and prominent African leader Richard Allen lived from February 14, 1760, until March 26, 1831. He established the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in 1794, the country's first autonomous Black religious institution.¹⁸ In 1794, he founded the first AME church in Philadelphia. When Allen was chosen as the first bishop of the AME Church in 1816, he concentrated on creating a church where freed Blacks could congregate without facing racial discrimination and slaves could find some sense of worth.¹⁹ He organized Sabbath schools to teach reading and promoted international groups to create political plans as part of his efforts to improve the social standing of the Black population.

These feats were cropped off his ability to read and write, even as a slave who was not disposed to learning, an ability that must have been developed personally. Richard Allen was born into slavery on February 14, 1760, considering that a child born to a slave family was the property of his or her parents’ master. His parent was currently living on Benjamin Chew’s Delaware property before Stokley Sturgis purchased them. Sturgis gave Richard's mother up for purchase and two among his siblings because of

¹⁸ Dickerson, “Our History: AME Church.”

¹⁹ Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 576.

financial issues. Allen and three of his siblings, which included his older brother and sister, remained with him, and they started going to Methodist Society gatherings in the area, which were open to Black people who were both enslaved and free.²⁰ Even though he was not converted, their captor Sturgis encouraged them. Given the perspective of many preachers about slavery and slaves' responsibility to their owners, it was disputed that this act was made from benevolence.

Learning and Early Religious Life

After releasing his slaves in 1775, the Reverend Garrettson started preaching in Delaware. He was one of several Methodist and Baptist clergymen who urged slaveowners to free their slaves following the American Revolutionary War. When Garrettson came to speak at the Sturgis property, Allen's master was moved by this assertion and started to ponder the idea that owning slaves was wrong.²¹ As soon as he realized that slavery was immoral, Sturgis gave slaves the chance to purchase their independence. Richard Allen, once known as "Negro Richard," worked overtime to obtain the money necessary to buy his release in 1780. Allen became a preacher in 1786 and was permitted to serve at the early morning sessions at Philadelphia's St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. The church council mandated that Black members be placed in a separate facility for service as he recruited more Black members. Often preaching in the park next to the church, Allen gradually grew his flock to around fifty people while sustaining himself with other menial jobs.

²⁰ Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 559-560.

²¹ Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 535.

Richard trained himself to read and write, two essential skills for him to work effectively in the church. This assertion may be inferred from the many church procedures that were essentially literary, such as reading from the Bible, singing hymns, and reading the beliefs and regulations. Local slave owners criticized him for joining the Methodist Church and evangelizing there. Allen and his brother worked extra hard for Sturgis to avoid claims that slaves were not productive due to religion. This determination would become useful when his freedom depended on his ability to purchase it.²² Secondly, the motivation for accomplishment yielded the consistency that made his colleagues select him as the first Bishop of the AME Church, even when the only Black minister was ordained in the White Methodist Episcopal Church.

Marital and Family Life

On October 19, 1790, Richard Allen was involved in a matrimonial tie with Flora. From 1787 to 1799, Flora and Richard collaborated closely in the initial periods of founding the church. They went to church school and collaborated to buy properties later gifted to the church or leased to households. After a protracted illness, Flora passed away on March 11, 1801. Scholars are unsure if they had any offspring. Allen married Virginian Sarah Bass, a freed slave, after relocating to Philadelphia. They met about 1800 after she had migrated to Philadelphia as a young child.²³ Six kids were born to him and his wife, Sarah Allen. Sarah Allen, known as the "Founding Mother," played a significant role in the development of the AME Church.

²² Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 304.

²³ Richardson, *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 661.

The Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church

The first records of Quinn Chapel date from 1844. Seven people often gathered in John Day's house, which was once an alleyway between Lake and Randolph Streets close to State Street.²⁴ The fellowship group grew over time and relocated in 1846 to an old school building at State and Madison Streets where they requested acceptance as a congregation and the dispatch of a preacher to serve them from the AME Church. Their application was granted, and on July 22, 1847, they received formal congregation status. Bishop William Paul Quinn is honored by the chapel's name, Quinn Chapel. The church has recently served as a venue for social, political, and community activities. Wynton Marsalis' "Mass" premiere performance was held in Quinn Chapel, while Patti LaBelle's "Going Home to Gospel" was performed there. Quinn also served as the backdrop for two sequences from the film "There Are No Children Here," and it was included in a scene from the film "Losing Isaiah."²⁵ Baby boomers make up several congregations, but several millennial preachers have been assigned to run the church, leading to a rift in generational ideology.

The Baby Boomers

An examination of a comparable 1993 work by Gary Russell, titled "Baby Boomers and the Church: A Seminar Towards Understanding," was conducted to comprehend the ideology of Christian baby boomers on a more comprehensive level beyond racial and economic segmentations. The Seventh-day Adventist church's

²⁴ Quinn Chicago, "Quinn Chapel History," Quinn Chicago, [https:// quinnchicago.org/history/](https://quinnchicago.org/history/).

²⁵ Quinn Chicago, "Quinn Chapel History."

attendance was examined in the literature, which noted that a sizable portion of the baby boomers, those who were born from 1946 to 1964, is absent. The purpose of this study was to ascertain what the ministry can do to recapture and or attract baby boomers. Two locations hosted surveys of Adelpian and Cedar Lake fresh alumni. Two questionnaires, one executed at the start of the symposium and one at its conclusion, were completed by the people surveyed.²⁶ These surveys were created to determine whether the seminar had improved participants' comprehension of the baby-boom demography regarding church attendance.

When the entry and exit survey questions were compared, it was clear that respondents' comprehension of both baby boomers and the necessity for customized ministry to this era had grown. The baby boomer era is unique and has needs. The study concluded that the Seventh-day Adventist church must address these requirements by beginning to develop a deliberate, niche approach to outreach to this demography.²⁷ This study is vital to the topic, considering it addresses the same generation. While the baby boomers in the Seventh-day Adventists confirmed to stop attending church services according to the studies, the ones in this study are threatened by the disconnection between the millennial ministers and the values they cherish in the AME church. The result of this study shows the possibility of understanding and modeling the ministry to meet the needs of the baby boomers. “Church, a Social Thing” by Abby Day in 2022 examined one of the most popular justifications the Boomers had for their previous

²⁶ G. E Russell, *Baby Boomers and the Church: A Seminar Towards Understanding* (Ann Arbor, MI: Digital Commons Andrews University, 1993), 5-6, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/222/>.

²⁷ Russell, *Baby Boomers and the Church*, 7-24.

pattern of church attendance. In their early years, the church served as a social group to which their family joined to foster social ties and to conform to broader societal norms on an essential aspect of "respectability."

The church was a gathering place for friends and relatives, not to connect with something more "spiritual" for boomers, who did not typically observe religious activities in their households or bore a notion of being near God or Jesus throughout their formative years. The frequent approach of separating children from grownups in a Sunday school throughout the middle of the twentieth century seems to have yielded the unintended result of eroding any feeling of spirituality or religion.²⁸ To the boomers, it was just the dominant trend, and a social risk to be out of trend.

While this article brought forward a key aspect of the baby boomers' inclination to Christianity, it presents a broad view that may not be an efficient representative of the racial demography of interest. However, it is worthy of note that the height of Jim Crow laws was experienced by the Blacks during this period across efforts to get properties and use public utilities, among other factors. While the whites may have been complacent about the issues of faith during the formative years of the baby boomer generation, the Blacks did not have the luxury. A common ground could have been found in enabling social bonding through fellowshiping and worshipping, as Blacks could generate strength and comfort during the meetings, they could not afford to lose sight of seeking God in their households. Most of the forefront activists were religious and

²⁸ A Day, *Church: Why Baby Boomers Turned from Religion*, https://www.bchumanist.ca/abby_day_baby_boomers#:~:text=Boomers%20were%20part%20of%20the,ethical%20than%20patriarchal%20church%20authority.

denomination leaders, bringing the religious narrative into the struggle. The AME Church was birthed on this premise.

The Millennial Generation and Religious Perception

According to a 2010 Pew Research poll, People between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine are much less religious than elder Americans. Compared to elder individuals, fewer young people identify as religious nowadays. Also, they are less likely to be associated with younger instances of their parents and grandparents. The Millennial generation, which includes those who were born about 1980 and started to mature around the year 2000, is made up of one-fourth of nonreligious people.²⁹ According to the result of the 2010 Pew research, Millennials are double as unattached as Baby Boomers had been as youngsters. They were 13% in the late 1970s, and much more unattached than individuals of Gen X were at a similar stage in their life cycles, who were 20% in the late 1990s.³⁰ Also, the young demography goes to church less frequently than elder Americans today. Less young people nowadays believe that faith is very essential in their lives than their elders.

The same research showed that young individuals hold more liberal socio-political ideas than older Americans do, and they are also more likely to believe that evolution provides the greatest cause for human life and less likely to perceive Hollywood as endangering their moral principles. The belief that there are unalterable

²⁹ Pew Research Center, "Religion Among the Millennials," Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/02/17/religion-among-the-millennials/>.

³⁰ Pew Research Center, "Religion Among the Millennials."

norms of good and evil is shared by both Millennials and elderly. Also, they are a little more at ease with churches and other institutions of worship participating in political issues than their elders are and a little more receptive to government initiatives to uphold morals.³¹ The Forum on Religion and Public Life of the Pew Research Center elaborates on these and additional results in the remaining section of the study. It examines how young individuals' religious preferences and social beliefs vary with those of older adults nowadays, and how Millennials stack up against earlier generations.³²

Churchgoing Trends Across Generations

The Gallup Poll attested to the consistency of American religious practices. According to a Gallup study conducted in July 1988, the proportion of American people who do not attend a church or synagogue has marginally grown during the previous ten years.³³ According to Jeff Friedman of the Gallup organization, however, the three percentage-point rise in the number of unchurched Americans, from 41% to 44%, is close to statistically equal.³⁴ Forty percent of all Americans frequently go to church or a synagogue, according to a subsequent Gallup poll on religious participation conducted in July 1988. The amount has not altered since the late 1930s. The proportion of Americans who are affiliated with a church or synagogue in 1987 was 69%, which was unchanged from the previous year and down a negligible one percentage point from 1977.

³¹ Pew Research Center, "Religion Among the Millennials."

³² Pew Research Center, "Religion Among the Millennials."

³³ Wesley Pippert, *The Revival of Religion in America* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1988), 1, <https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre1988072200>.

³⁴ Pippert, *The Revival of Religion in America*, 1.

War Babies and Baby Boomers

People who were born during the Great Depression have consistently attended church and synagogue more consistently than following generations. As they reached their twenties during the volatile 1960s, War Babies stopped attending church, and they continued to do so during the post-Vietnam and Watergate era of the 1970s. They have only recently begun to slowly return to church as they reach and pass middle age. The baby boomer generation likewise left the church in their twenties but returned between their thirties and early forties.³⁵ Particularly, baby boomers with higher incomes are coming back. It can be noticed that the war babies that precede the baby boomers would just have reached or passed their middle age when the baby boomers were in their thirties and early forties, showing that the return of these two generations to the church may have been triggered by a periodic event.

The Depression Babies

Regarding their commitment to attending church, there appeared to be a generational difference between those born during the Great Depression and those born during World War II and the baby boomers. The 1930s saw the birth of the Depression Babies, who grew up in a more immobile and rooted society where systemic allegiance and practice were significant.³⁶ They tended to attend church, to keep attending as the years passed, and to attend the same church. According to Gallup surveys, in 1958, 48% of young adults in their twenties frequently went to church. The polls revealed that 46%

³⁵ Pippert, *The Revival of Religion in America*, 1.

³⁶ Pippert, *The Revival of Religion in America*, 1.

of these Depression Babies remained regular church attendees ten years later when they entered their thirties. According to Robert Wuthnow, the Depression Babies had attained a level of maturity that made them less susceptible to the temptation to leave their church or synagogue during the challenging 1960s and 1970s.³⁷ Moreover, statistics from the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) show that, when they approached fifty years of age in the early 1980s, 38% of Depression-era Infants continued to religiously attend church, up from 40% in the 1970s.

The Millennial Generation

Every church tries to reach millennials, but oftentimes they are unsuccessful. One may have a better understanding of millennials and what they expect from a church by using facts about this generation. Even though they may be a generation that was nurtured in the church, several of them no longer go. Yet, they are now adults and have households. This generation came of age at the inception of the digital revolution. Information was readily available and could be disseminated with ease.³⁸ It was relatively easier to form communication clusters where ideologies can be discussed due to the inception and dominance of social media. It is safe to say that there were several instances that were competing with the millennial generation's commitment to attending churches. However, churches that have been able to evolve to include technologies and attraction points have been able to comparatively gain the attendance of this generation above other churches.

³⁷ Pippert, *The Revival of Religion in America*, 1.

³⁸ T. Costello, "Important Statistics About Millennials Your Church Needs to Know," Reach Right Studios, <https://reachrightstudios.com/statistics-about-millennials/>.

Putting it Together

There is a notable generational experience and attribute that can provide insight into the models that can be implemented for trans-generational understanding.

Considering the generational gap that exists between the baby boomers dominated congregation of the Quinn Chapel of the African Methodist Church, the difference in generational experience forms the gap in interest that can cause a conflict of focus between the ministers who have been constantly from the millennial generation and the congregants who are majorly baby boomers. The conflict could be noticed in the choice of messages, outreaches, music, and perception of what the Christian life should be. In a situation where these potential areas of conflict are not properly managed, it could result in a polarized system of worship or activities that can displace the interest of a particular generation or, in this case, the baby boomers. Knowledge of the different experiences of these generations and its resultant effect on their churchgoing attitude becomes valuable to the Quinn Chapel Scenario.

Generation-Based Interest in Church

Perception of Evangelism and Outreaches

In a survey conducted in 2021 by Graceworks as part of their Generations Project initiative, they asked Baby Boomers about their views on evangelism and discovered that they saw it as a crucial endeavor that was and should still be the church's top priority. Equipped with resources like spiritual laws, evangelism seemed much like informing others about God and getting them to recite the prayer of repentance in evangelism

programs. They said that people ought to learn how to achieve atonement and paradise since they were trapped in their wrongdoings.³⁹ The millennial generation, who now exists in an era when technology has replaced the necessity for pure information communication, have significantly altered this orientation. Most of them believe that their non-Christian acquaintances already understand the core of the gospel and that providing them with more knowledge would not significantly change their minds.⁴⁰ As a result, they are dissatisfied with the idea of evangelism.

Perception of Sermon and Church Ideology

The millennial generation grew up in an era when political issues like gay marriage, gender identity, and abortion are popular in public discourse. The societal pressure is on people to be more open-minded and accepting of people's differences. This pressure may resonate differently among the Christian demography of the baby boomers and millennial generations. The susceptibility of the different generations to this pressure could be different and has the potential to form a disconnection between them. There is a possibility that a sermon may originate its theme from dominant public discourse and have the propensity to lean for or against specific generational perception. In the effort to address the generational disconnection between the baby boomer congregants and the millennial ministers, one may have to consider how the themes of sermons and church ideologies would rub off on them.

³⁹ W. H. Ho, "Are Young Christians Interested in Evangelism?" Graceworks, <https://graceworks.com.sg/are-young-christians-interested-in-evangelism/>.

⁴⁰ Ho, "Are Young Christians Interested in Evangelism?"

Perception of Music and Extra-Liturgical Activities

In the contemporary space, there have been a series of transitions in entertainment, which include genres of music, comedies, and movies. The church space has also recorded a series of transitions in the areas of concern, especially in music. Music holds an important space in the liturgical configuration of many churches, with the Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal not being an exception. Following the recent series of African Methodist Episcopal Church Music and Christian Arts Ministry concerts, one can suggest that there has been a paradigm shift from the traditional Negro Spirituals that held the Black faith through its perilous time.⁴¹ The idea of freedom in the theological, musical, and modernity context, according to Patrick McCreless' 2021 article titled "Richard Allen and the Sacred Music of Black Americans, 1740-1850," is inadequate if it ignores the sacred music of the North America slaves, demography for whom Christianity, songs, and liberty were of immense individual and social effect.⁴²

The author places Allen in the history of black sacred music in the U.S. as his church's hymn compiler and as a significant mediator between the British-inclined Protestant hymnody system and the Blacks' sacred music performance. This instance points to the important position occupied by music in the history of the church's establishment. The hymnal arrangement of the Music and Christian Art Ministry falls into two different categories or genres.⁴³ How the difference in genres/categories that apply to the two generations is an important consideration to address the disconnection.

⁴¹ AME Music and Christian Art Ministry, "The Blood," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zabhqInr3OM>.

⁴² P. McCreless, "Richard Allen and the Sacred Music of Black Americans, 1740–1850," *Theology, Music, and Modernity*, (2021): 201-206.

⁴³ McCreless, "Richard Allen and the Sacred Music of Black Americans, 1740–1850," 201–216.

Conclusion

The Quinn Chapel AME Church, christened after Bishop Paul Quinn, had successfully requested acceptance as a congregation and the dispatch of a preacher to serve them from the AME Church in 1847. The Quinn Chapel, populated by baby boomers, has been host to a series of millennial ministers, causing the problem of inter-generational disconnection. It is suggested that the creation of a defined period of learning between the two generation sections of the church, through workshops and seminars, would increase understanding between them, and will reduce or eliminate the disconnection. However, an understanding of the historical events and the established goal of the church can create a melting pot for the two generations, which involves focusing on the social, political, educational, and economic gap experienced by Blacks in contemporary society.

The creation of a place of worship where black people may feel respected was a key component in the founding of the AME Church. Those who were enslaved would likewise be accorded this respect. Many slaves had the chance to interact with Christian clergy who had strong anti-slavery preaching and who also behaved in ways to support those messages. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, formerly known as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, was founded roughly 150 years before the baby boomers were born. The Church has evolved via a variety of American events and cultures, which served as the church's focal point at each distinct season.

During the American Civil War, some confederate states that were infamous for harboring slaves in the south were defeated. While they sought permission from the Union Army to get access to the slaves in the defeated confederate states, the goal of the

church was adapted to evangelism. The church's subject and focus have evolved over time to reflect generational experiences, which led to a mismatch between clergy and congregational generations.

Different perspectives were used to evaluate how religion affected ideas that were harmful to the welfare of slaves as well as their roles in society. It makes sense that religion would have brought comfort to the weak and downtrodden. A passage from a devotional book was excerpted and stated that all servants ought to show their masters total submission. When juxtaposed with the requirements of slave masters, it raises doubt about the author's standpoint. The fast rise of tobacco in the seventeenth century raised the demand for servants. Because it was a labor-intensive crop that required many workers, the prevalence of slavery was rising, with Black people taking the worst knocks. Black people came to be perceived as prospective slaves and lower-class people in society throughout time, even at places of worship. Some of the members founded the Bethel Black Methodist Episcopal Church under the guidance of Richard, who acquired his freedom and was ordained in the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church.

Reconciling the generational divides may include harmonizing the generational experience while using reactions to church activities like evangelism, sermons and church ideologies, music, and extra-liturgical programs to find common working grounds. The synthesis of the church's growth and generation-based growth trend supports the hypothesis when a broad implementation of the recommendation is executed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church is dealing with a complex and difficult situation because of the generational divide that has developed between the congregation, which is primarily made up of baby boomers. The millennial pastor is tasked with leading them. The relationship between the congregation and the pastor has become estranged because of the generational gap, which presents serious challenges to the church's ability to function effectively and carry out its mission.

People from many generations have always gathered in the church to worship and learn. The church currently faces a substantial puzzle in bridging the generational divide. Younger and older generations frequently disagree on values, beliefs, and attitudes, which can lead to friction and conflict. For the church to comprehend and resolve these generational gaps, practical theology must be put into practice. It is necessary to bridge between the academic and practical facets of theology. Practical theology is a field that blends faith, practice, theory, and action.

Due to the generational divide, there are tensions and disputes inside the church. However, with the help of practical theology, it is possible to bridge these gaps and create a church that is stronger, more cohesive, and appealing to people of all ages. By applying the ideas of practical theology, the pastor can establish a relevant church and

interesting to people of all ages and a more cohesive community that reflects the love and grace of God.

Practical Theology: Its Definition

Over the years, the academic topic of Practical Theology has developed greatly to become a multifaceted and integrative area of theological study. Practical theology is, in its most basic sense, "the branch of Christian theology that focuses on the practical consequences of religious beliefs and the application of theology in daily life."¹ This little description begins to scrape the surface of what this profession entails. It is necessary to look at history, theories, and current methods to inquire into its many facets. The history of Practical Theology began in the early church when authors like Augustine of Hippo and John Chrysostom spoke about the value of integrating theology with pastoral care and social activity.²

The Enlightenment, on the other hand, and its growing emphasis on the empirical and practical aspects of religious life gave rise to the current development of Practical Theology.³ Friedrich Schleiermacher, who insisted that theology should be based on the needs and experiences of the community played a significant role in this evolution.⁴

¹ E. Graham, H. Walton, and F. Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2005), 286.

² R. R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 8.

³ J. Swinton, and H. Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2006), 16.

⁴ D. S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 82.

Practical Theology has used several methodologies and approaches, which reflects the varied interests and objectives of its practitioners. The pastoral cycle, commonly referred to as the praxis-action-reflection cycle, is one of the most frequently employed techniques. Experience, investigation, reflection, and action are the four stages of this approach, which was made popular by British theologian and pastoral care specialist Stephen Pattison.⁵ With the use of theological and theoretical resources, practical theologians can critically assess the lived experiences of individuals and communities, respond to pressing social concerns with knowledge, and critically reflect on these experiences.

The correlation technique, as put out by American theologian Paul Tillich, is a significant approach to Practical Theology. To allow for mutual learning and challenge, this approach aims to open a dialogue between the issues and questions of modern society and the Christian heritage.⁶ Instigating this discussion allows practical theologians to address current social and ethical concerns while also expanding their knowledge of Christianity.

Practical Theology has embraced a more interdisciplinary and global viewpoint in recent years. This transition is observable in the rise in popularity of liberation theology, feminist theology, and postcolonial theology, all of which stress the significance of hearing from marginalized and oppressed communities' experiences and viewpoints.⁷ By

⁵ E. Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 140.

⁶ S. Pattison, J. Woodward, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 71.

⁷ B. J. Miller-McLemore, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 148.

utilizing these strategies, practical theologians can create theological frameworks that are more inclusive and justice-focused while critically analyzing the role of privilege and power in religious practice.

To better grasp the intricacies of religious life and guide theological thought, Practical Theology has also become more and more involved with the social sciences. It has drawn on fields like psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education.⁸ In addition to enhancing the discipline's methodological toolkit, this multidisciplinary involvement promotes a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex nature of religious experience.

Practitioners of Practical Theology encounter difficulties and opportunities as the field develops. Maintaining a balance between the discipline's academic and pastoral facets is one of the biggest challenges, as theological discourse needs to remain rooted in the lives of individuals and communities. A commitment to reflexivity and humility in the face of the diverse and changing nature of religious experience is also required considering the growing pluralism and complexity of religious life in the twenty-first century. These demands are made in addition to the ongoing dialogue and collaboration with other disciplines and faith traditions.⁹

In conclusion, practical theology is a broad field that aims to connect theological theory and real-world experience. Practical theologians encourage both individual development and transformation as well as the continuing improvement and enrichment

⁸ F. Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 111.

⁹ Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, 108.

of religious practices and traditions through the process of theological inquiry. Practical theologians address the issues and opportunities that arise in contemporary religious contexts through empirical study and critical discourse, promoting better communication and collaboration between people and between communities and organizations. The field's continued development will surely have a big impact on how people of religion interact with across generations.

The History of Practical Theology: An Overview

Over time, the study of Practical Theology has undergone tremendous change. Due to the multiple theological and philosophical changes that have characterized its historical growth, Practical Theology is now recognized as a field that bridges the gap between Theoretical Theology and actual religious experiences. This exchange will examine the evolution of Practical Theology throughout its history, highlighting significant figures and turning points.

The line separating Theoretical Theology from Practical Theology was not yet well established in the early years of Christian Theology. As seen in the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who attempted to link theological ideas with the moral and spiritual lives of believers, theoretical inquiry and action were frequently interwoven.¹⁰ As theology matured as a field of study, a distinction between theoretical (systematic and historical) and applied (pastoral and moral) theology emerged.¹¹

¹⁰ D. Tracy, *The Foundations of Practical Theology* (New York, NY: J. H. Kok. 1981), 9-22.

¹¹ E. Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 106-144.

Practical Theology in the late Middle Ages and early Modern Era was mostly focused on preparing and equipping clergy for pastoral ministry. This distinction was made official by the Council of Trent (1545–1563), which ordered the establishment of seminaries to give a systematic education in theology, including Practical Theology.¹² Protestant theologians during the Reformation, including Martin Luther and John Calvin, highlighted the significance of the practical application of theological knowledge in the lives of common believers, significantly influencing the field's development.¹³

Practical Theology underwent substantial developments throughout the Enlightenment. Insights from the social sciences and empirical research techniques started to be incorporated into Practical Theology as reason and empirical observation came to be considered as vital sources of knowledge.¹⁴ A significant contributor to the growth of contemporary Practical Theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) saw the field as one that dealt with life experiences and sought to solve the practical issues of both individuals and communities.¹⁵

As it participated in numerous theological and social movements in the twentieth century, Practical Theology continued to develop. For instance, the emergence of Liberation Theology emphasized social justice and the necessity for practical theologians to take an active role in addressing the needs and worries of oppressed communities.¹⁶

¹² Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 51.

¹³ Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, 111.

¹⁴ G. Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 125-187.

¹⁵ R. R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 243.

The creation of Feminist Practical Theology as a subfield of Practical Theology, which aimed to address gender-related concerns in theological discourse and practice, was impacted by the feminist movement as well.

The change in Practical Theology toward a more interdisciplinary approach was another key development of the twentieth century. Don Browning's (1934–2010) writings, a well-known American practical theologian, serve as an example of this development. To better understand and meet the demands of modern society, Browning believed that Practical Theology should participate in interdisciplinary conversation with disciplines like psychology, sociology, and the natural sciences.¹⁷

Practical Theology has developed over the past few years as it attempts to address the potential and problems of a world that is becoming more linked and globally oriented. To promote greater understanding and cooperation across varied communities, academics like Richard Osmer and Elaine Graham stressed the significance of critical reflection and communication with other religious traditions and secular disciplines.¹⁸

The development of Practical Theology has been influenced by a wide range of philosophers and movements throughout the field's history. Practical Theology has developed from its early days as a crucial component of Christian theological reflection to its current multidisciplinary approach. It now aspires to close the gap between Theoretical Theology and the lived religious experiences of individuals and communities. Undoubtedly, the area will continue to play a crucial part in determining how people of

¹⁶ B. J. Miller-McLemore, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 184, 527.

¹⁷ Miller-McLemore, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 194–204.

¹⁸ P. H. Ballard and J. Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (London, UK: SPCK, 2006), 52.

faith interact with and react to the challenging problems and opportunities that develop within contemporary religious contexts as it develops and changes to meet the demands of the modern world. Practical Theology will continue to be a vital and important field of study for anyone looking to comprehend and respond to the urgent issues of our world by embracing its multidisciplinary nature and upholding a commitment to theological thought and practical engagement.

Reformation and Practical Theology: The Impact of Martin Luther and John Calvin

Practical Theology was greatly influenced by the Protestant Reformation, which was started by Martin Luther and afterwards propelled by other theologians like John Calvin. It set the stage for pastoral care, the value of preaching, and the church's empowerment of the laity. This chapter explores how Luther and Calvin influenced Practical Theology and the function of the pastor in the contemporary church.

The Protestant Reformation was spearheaded by German theologian and monk Martin Luther (1483–1566). His Ninety-Five Theses (1517), which attacked the Roman Catholic Church's activities in general and the sale of indulgences, made him famous. Luther shifted the emphasis from ecclesiastical hierarchy to the individual believer's relationship with God by emphasizing the authority of scripture and the notion of salvation by faith alone.¹⁹

Luther's writings had a profound impact on Practical Theology. He maintained that all Christians were priests and could approach God directly with faith without the aid

¹⁹ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 292-327.

of a priest.²⁰ The paradigm of pastoral care was completely altered by this notion, sometimes known as the priesthood of all believers. All believers were urged to take responsibility for one another's spiritual well-being, and pastoral ministry was no longer limited to the ordained clergy.²¹

Luther highlighted the value of preaching this fundamental change in how the priesthood was perceived. He believed the pastor's main responsibility was to preach the Bible, in public worship and one-on-one pastoral care. He held that the Holy Spirit transformed the lives of believers by working through the faithful preaching of the Bible.²² So, it was expected of Lutheran pastors to be well-versed in scripture and apply it to the lives of their flock. Pastors might use Luther's Little Catechism (1529) to teach laypeople the fundamentals of Christian Theology and practice, further emphasizing the importance of scripture in church life.²³

The French theologian and reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) was a key figure in the development of Practical Theology during the Reformation. Calvin, like Luther, upheld the Bible's preeminent authority and the exclusivity of justification by faith. Calvin went above and beyond by creating a more comprehensive theological and ecclesiastical structure that came to be known as Calvinism or Reformed Theology.²⁴

²⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 48.

²¹ Timothy J. Wengert, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation and Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 36.

²² Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1950), 157-181.

²³ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959), 12-15.

²⁴ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 407-460.

Calvin's thoughts on preaching and pastoral care are most notable examples of his influence on Practical Theology. He held that the congregation's understanding and application of biblical truths to their everyday lives was the pastor's fundamental duty as a trustworthy expositor of God's Word.²⁵ Calvin highlighted the value of expository preaching, which involves the pastor methodically elaborating on scripture, word by verse, as opposed to depending on topic sermons, to achieve this.

Calvin also viewed pastors as shepherds who oversaw the upkeep and development of their flocks' spiritual lives. He believed that pastors should be prepared to meet the spiritual, emotional, and practical needs of the flock by offering pastoral counseling and direction based on biblical principles.²⁶ The Presbyterian system of church government was established because of this emphasis on pastoral care, and a group of elders, including the pastor, shared responsibility for observing the congregation's spiritual health.²⁷

Modern Christianity still reflects on the Protestant Reformation's influence on practical theology, particularly as shown in the writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin. The way pastors minister to their congregations has been impacted by their emphasis on the pastor's duty and the value of preaching, which has encouraged a greater focus on the explanation of scripture and the application of biblical truth to daily life.

²⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 378.

²⁶ John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 32-34.

²⁷ David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback, eds. *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P and R Publishing, 2008), 411.

In conclusion, the development of Practical Theology was greatly influenced by the Protestant Reformation, which was headed by influential individuals like Martin Luther and John Calvin. They established the foundation for a more biblically centered method of Christian ministry that still has an impact on the contemporary church by highlighting the significance of the pastor's role in preaching and pastoral care.

Approaches to Practical Theology

The purpose of Situational Theology and Practical Theology is to close the gap between religious ideas and real-world experience. These disciplines are crucial to the life and work of the church because they center on the application of theological principles to specific contexts. Regarding Situational Theology, this chapter will address many approaches to Practical Theology, emphasizing the significance of context, the function of experience, and the value of interdisciplinary discussion.

By studying the connection between faith and life, the field of Practical Theology tries to solve the practical issues that affect religious communities.²⁸ Among other facets of religious life, it entails the study of pastoral care, Christian education, liturgy, and ethics. To create practical wisdom that directs the church's ministry, practical theologians use techniques, including empirical study, theological contemplation, and critical analysis.²⁹

²⁸ John Swinton, and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2016), 123-144.

²⁹ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 41-75.

On the other hand, Situational Theology is a theological strategy that stresses the significance of context in comprehending and interpreting religious phenomena.³⁰ It aims to comprehend the distinctive characteristics of circumstances and respond to them with theological understanding, enabling the church to modify its teaching and practice to meet the shifting needs of the world. Situational Theology is interested in how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence religious expressions and experiences.

Contextual Theology is one of the most important approaches of Practical Theology in connection to Situational Theology. Every theological study is founded situations, which have an impact on how we perceive and comprehend our faith, according to contextual theology.³¹ By focusing on the social, political, and cultural influences that form religious practices and beliefs, practical theologians working within this paradigm attempt to create theologies that are pertinent to and sensitive to the issues that different communities face.³² This method and Situational Theology both stress the significance of comprehending the contextual elements that shape religious life and practice.

The experiential approach to Practical Theology is another method that has elements in common with Situational Theology. This approach places a strong emphasis on how experience shapes our perception of God and the universe.³³ The theological

³⁰ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 22.

³¹ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 41.

³² Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1996), 83-143.

³³ James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995), 46.

insights that result from these encounters with the divine are studied by practical theologians who operate within this framework as they examine the religious experiences of both people and groups. This strategy is in line with Situational Theology's concern on the material realities of human life and the ways in which our unique circumstances impact our experiences of God.

The multidisciplinary approach to Practical Theology complements Situational Theology as a third method. This approach acknowledges that theology does not live in a vacuum but rather engages in ongoing conversation with other academic disciplines like sociology, psychology, and the natural sciences.³⁴ Using an interdisciplinary perspective, practical theologians work to better comprehend religious phenomena by incorporating ideas from many fields into their discussions. The desire for engaging with the larger intellectual and social context in which theology is entrenched is shared by this method and Situational Theology.

In conclusion, the disciplines of Practical Theology work together to overcome the gap between theological ideas and the experiences of religious communities. These methods help theologians create theologies that are pertinent and receptive to the difficulties experienced by believers in a variety of contexts by placing an emphasis on context, experience, and interdisciplinary discussion. The insights provided by Situational Theology and Practical Theology will become more and more important as the church continues to traverse the difficulties of the modern world to direct its mission and ministry.

³⁴ Johannes A. Van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical-hermeneutical Approach* (Kampen, UK: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993), 20.

Biblical Foundations of Practical Theology

A crucial part of theological study is Practical Theology, which focuses on how to apply religious principles to everyday life and the practice of ministry. The Bible serves as the basis for Practical Theology, providing direction and instruction for several facets of Christian service and living. This chapter will investigate the biblical underpinnings of Practical Theology, looking at significant texts and topics that influence its conception and application.

The command to love and serve others is one of the major biblical issues in Practical Theology. This idea is best illustrated by Jesus' teachings and deeds, since Jesus frequently showed compassion and concern for those in need.³⁵ Jesus exhorts his followers to love one another in the gospels, saying that this is the defining characteristic of authentic discipleship (Jn. 13:34-35). The Good Samaritan parable (Lk. 10:25-37) also emphasizes the significance of being merciful and compassionate to people in need, despite social or religious obstacles.

The idea of the priesthood of all believers, which emphasizes each believer's duty to participate in ministry and spiritual care, is another scriptural underpinning for practical theology. This notion has its origins in the Old Bible, which refers to Israel as a "kingdom of priests" (Ex.19:6). The Apostle Peter reiterates this idea in the New Testament, saying that all Christians are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1 Ptr. 2:9). The idea that every Christian has a role to

³⁵ Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).

play in the life and ministry of the church is affirmed by the idea of the priesthood of all believers.

Another crucial scriptural foundation for Practical Theology is the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20).³⁶ Jesus commands his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have taught you" (Matt. 28:18-20). In the life and ministry of the church, this command highlights the value of evangelism, discipleship, and teaching. Practical Theology aims to provide believers the abilities and understanding they need to properly fulfill this commission.

Paul's writings are a great resource for learning about the biblical roots of Practical Theology. His letters to other churches cover a variety of practical topics, such as organizing worship services and resolving disputes. Paul, for instance, emphasizes the necessity of harmony and order in worship while discussing the appropriate use of spiritual gifts within the church in 1 Corinthians 12–14.³⁷ In a similar vein, Paul exhorts Christians to live lives characterized by love, humility, and hospitality in Romans chapter twelve, encouraging them to use their gifts in service to the body of Christ.

Further advice on the practical facets of church life and ministry can be found in the pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Tim. and Ti.). These letters, which are typically credited to Paul, give guidance to church leaders on matters such as the duties and qualifications of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3; Ti. 1), the value of solid theology and instruction (2 Tim.

³⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew. The New American Commentary*, vol. 22 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992), 257.

³⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 646-780.

2), and the requirement for pastoral care and oversight (1 Tim. 4; Tim. 2). The pastoral epistles also stress the significance of upholding virtuous behaviour and character among believers, emphasizing the relationship between doctrine, and practice in church life.

Another crucial pillar of Practical Theology is the biblical understanding of justice. God's desire for justice and righteousness is seen throughout both the Old and New Testaments (Is. 1:17; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 23:23).³⁸ The Bible often urges us to protect and care for vulnerable groups, including immigrants, widows, and orphans (Deu. 10:18; Jam. 1:27). To empower believers to participate in ministries of compassion and justice, Practical Theology focuses on resolving the structural problems that support injustice and promoting the creation of a more just society.

Ultimately, the Bible offers a solid grounding for Practical Theology, providing direction and teaching for various facets of Christian life and ministry. The development and application of Practical Theology are influenced by major biblical themes like the call to love and serve others, the priesthood of all believers, the Great Commission, Paul's teachings, and the idea of justice. The church can make sure that its ministries remain true to the biblical testimony and successfully serve the practical needs of believers and the larger community by rooting Practical Theology in scripture.

Implications of Practical Theology

Practical Theology is a crucial part of theological studies that concentrates on how to apply religious principles to everyday life and the practice of ministry. Several facets of Christian life, including pastoral care, social involvement, and the advancement of

³⁸ J. H. Wright, *Christopher Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 230.

theological education, are significantly impacted by this field. The importance and effects of Practical Theology on the existence and work of the church will be investigated.

Practical Theology has several important ramifications, one of which is the necessity of strong pastoral care within the church.³⁹ As Christians traverse the intricacies of life, they frequently face difficulties that call for help and direction from their church communities. Pastors and other church leaders are given the tools and resources by Practical Theology to effectively care for their congregations. This could entail psychotherapy, spiritual guidance, or the creation of ministries and support groups that cater to needs. Practical Theology highlights the critical part that the church plays in fostering the spiritual and emotional well-being of its people by highlighting the significance of pastoral care.

The church is encouraged by Practical Theology to act against societal injustices and problems.⁴⁰ Practical Theology, which has its roots in the biblical command to love and serve others, aims to empower Christians to meet the needs of their neighborhoods and the larger society. This could entail fighting for the rights and dignity of oppressed communities, or it might entail addressing structural problems like racism, poverty, and environmental degradation.

Another crucial effect of Practical Theology is the advancement of theological education.⁴¹ Practical Theology as a discipline aims to close the gap between scholarly

³⁹ Craig R. Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "Reformed Theology and the Practices of Piety," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, edited by Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 45-62.

⁴⁰ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 94.

⁴¹ Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 128.

theology and believers' actual experiences. This requires creating curricula and instructional strategies that combine theoretical understanding with real-world abilities and applications. Hence, theological education can better equip upcoming pastors, ministers, and lay leaders to deal with the issues that their congregations and communities encounter in the actual world.

Christian identity and discipleship formation are impacted by Practical Theology as well.⁴² The capacity for spiritual discernment and moral judgment should be developed as believers deepen their knowledge of scripture and the Christian tradition. Practical Theology offers a framework for comprehending how the Bible's lessons might be applied to the complexity of modern life, assisting believers in navigating the opportunities and obstacles they face in their day-to-day walk with Christ.

A further effect of Practical Theology is its contribution to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.⁴³ Practical theologians can foster mutual understanding and collaboration between many religious traditions by engaging with the real-world issues and struggles of varied faith communities.

Examples of Practical Theology: Evangelical Care

Pastoral care is a type of Practical Theology that focuses on giving emotional and spiritual assistance to people and communities who are going through challenging

⁴² James C. Wilhoit and John M. Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian: Developmental Perspectives on Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint Books, 1995), 19.

⁴³ Catherine Cornille, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 55-89.

times.⁴⁴ Many other types of pastoral care are available, such as counselling, spiritual guidance, and support groups. Pastors and other caregivers can assist people and communities in navigating life's obstacles, such as illness, loss, and personal crises, by applying religious insights and principles to practical situations.

The growth of pastoral care ministries in hospitals and hospices serves as an illustration. Given the significance of attending to a person's holistic needs, which include their spiritual and emotional well-being, these ministries aim to offer patients and their families spiritual and emotional assistance.⁴⁵

Religious Instruction

Christian education, which aims to provide believers the knowledge and abilities required to carry out their faith in the world is another illustration of Practical Theology.⁴⁶ Christian education can be used in a variety of settings, including as churches, schools, and community organizations. It involves a wide range of activities, from Sunday school lessons to theological seminaries.

The creation of programs intended to assist people in meaningful and transformative biblical engagement is one example of this. These programs are designed to give people the knowledge and skills they need to comprehend the historical and cultural backgrounds of the Bible as well as its theological and ethical implications for

⁴⁴ John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 15.

⁴⁵ Brad Kelle, "The Role of Pastoral Care in Hospital Ministry," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counselling* 62, no. 1-2 (2008): 67-73.

⁴⁶ Richard R. Osmer, *Teaching for Faith: A Guide for Teachers of Adult Classes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 197.

modern society. Pastors and teachers may enable believers to live out their faith in meaningful and significant ways by integrating Practical Theology into Christian education.

Justice for Everyone

Social justice is a third instance of Practical Theology since it aims to alleviate societal disparities and systematic injustices. The biblical testimony, which repeatedly urges the protection of the weak and the disenfranchised as well as the advancement of a just and equitable society, serves as the foundation for social justice.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Finally, Practical Theology is a dynamic and multidisciplinary field that focuses on the practical application of religious beliefs and doctrines, such as pastoral care, Christian education, and social justice. Practical Theology uses a variety of theological and social science disciplines, such as biblical studies, ethics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology, to develop approaches and frameworks that can be applied to a variety of contexts and situations.

Practical Theology emphasizes the importance of spiritual and emotional well-being in individuals and communities through its emphasis on pastoral care. It also encourages the church to address social issues and injustices by advocating for systemic change and promoting policies that benefit the common good. Furthermore, Practical Theology is important in the development of theological education because it prepares

⁴⁷ Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 51-94.

future pastors, ministers, and lay leaders to address real-world challenges in their congregations and communities.

In essence, Practical Theology serves as a reminder that Christian faith is a lived faith that calls its adherents to engage with the world in concrete ways, rather than a set of abstract beliefs. Practical Theology enables believers to navigate the challenges and opportunities they face in their daily walk with Christ by providing a framework for understanding how the teachings of the Bible can be applied to the complexities of modern life.

As the church seeks to fulfill its mission and calling in the world, practical theological insights and approaches will continue to play an important role in shaping its witness and ministry. Practical Theology can help the church respond more effectively to the challenges of the modern world while remaining faithful to its core mission and values by remaining attuned to the needs and concerns of the world and drawing on the wisdom of scripture and the lived experiences of believers. Practical Theology emphasizes theory-practice integration and context. These foundations have the potential to encourage unity, inclusivity, and responsiveness to twenty first century challenges and possibilities by building empathy, understanding, and collaboration within Quinn Chapel AME Church.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATION

In recent times, there has been a surge in interest in intergenerational communication, particularly in bridging communication gaps that exist between the baby boomer and millennial generations in various settings, including churches. The significance of efficient intergenerational communication cannot be exaggerated, particularly in religious institutions, where millennials are embracing pastoral roles, and baby boomers constitute a significant portion of the congregation. This interdisciplinary chapter aims to investigate intergenerational communication in the church context by utilizing theories and concepts from psychology and communication studies. To achieve this, the chapter will employ the communication accommodation theory, which suggests that individuals modify their communication style to suit the requirements of their conversational partners, as a framework for analyzing intergenerational communication in the church setting. Furthermore, the chapter will utilize generational difference theories to recognize distinct communication obstacles encountered by millennials and baby boomers within the church environment. Through this approach, the chapter aims to shed light on how the generational gap impacts intergenerational communication and identify potential solutions to improve communication between the two generations in the church context

The evolution of human interaction was marked by the constant presence of communication in diverse formats. Communication has taken on various forms throughout history, from spoken traditions to the emergence of written language, the advent of printing, and the development of the telegraph.¹ Nonetheless, the emergence of the internet and digital technology in the last few decades has brought about a fundamental shift in communication, making it faster, more reachable, and more collaborative than ever. As a result of these transformations, the communication terrain has become more diverse and is continuously evolving.² The past of communication is a captivating theme that offers valuable knowledge on the means through which we have conveyed information to each other throughout the ages. A prime example of this is the fifteenth century's introduction of the printing press, which brought about a communication revolution by enabling the mass production of books and other print materials.³

The outcome of this new technology was the democratization of knowledge, as information and ideas became more accessible to a wider audience than ever before. Similarly, the telegraph, a nineteenth-century invention, revolutionized communication by enabling messages to be sent across long distances in a matter of hours, as opposed to days or weeks. The advent of the internet and digital technology has brought about a new era of communication. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have revolutionized

¹ Robert D. Strom and Paris S. Strom, "Assessment of Intergenerational Communication and Relationships," *Educational Gerontology* 41, no.1 (2015): 41-52.

² John Roberto, "Our Future is Intergenerational," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no.1 (2012): 105-120.

³ Angie Williams and John F Nussbaum, *Intergenerational Communication Across the Life Span* (Philadelphia, PA: Routledge 2013), 89.

the way people interact with one another while messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram have made it more convenient than ever to communicate with individuals across the globe. These transformations have likewise had a significant effect on communication within the church community. The dissimilarities between millennials and baby boomers have been thoroughly recorded and go beyond just their ways of communication.⁴

Typically, millennials display higher levels of technological proficiency, embrace progressive social and political views, and prioritize attaining a healthy work-life equilibrium and pursuing personal development. On the other hand, baby boomers generally place high importance on diligence and stability in their employment, hold more traditional social and political beliefs, and prioritize showing allegiance and deference to those in positions of authority. These contrasts may result in misinterpretations and hindered communication, especially within religious contexts where conventional values and doctrines may conflict with modern perspectives. Baby boomers may favor in-person or phone communication, whereas millennials may lean towards using text messaging or social media platforms to communicate. The emphasis on conventional religious practices and rituals may be more pronounced among baby boomers, while millennials may exhibit a greater inclination towards adopting innovative and unconventional ways of worship.

Generational disparities within the church can result in communication obstacles that impede effective discourse among different age groups. Through an interdisciplinary approach that involves analyzing the evolution of communication and comparing the

⁴ Jim Merhaut, "Intergenerational Faith Formation Today: Its Impact and Sustainability," *Lifelong Faith Journal* 7 (2013): 28-37.

characteristics of millennials and baby boomers, this chapter aims to elucidate the distinct prospects and difficulties that emerge when different generations interact within the context of the church. Furthermore, the study will investigate effective methods and optimal approaches for minimizing the communication divides that may arise between millennials and baby boomers, with special emphasis on the role of pastors in facilitating intergenerational communication within their congregations.

To overcome intergenerational communication barriers, employing the principles of communication accommodation theory can be effective. According to this theory, individuals tend to adapt their communication patterns to align better with their interlocutors' requirements. For instance, if a baby boomer prefers in-person conversations, a millennial religious leader might need to modify their communication style and arrange a face-to-face meeting to establish a stronger bond and mutual understanding.⁵ Encouraging intergenerational communication and fostering empathy is another viable approach. One can achieve this by intentionally facilitating interactions between various age groups and creating opportunities for them to exchange ideas and outlooks. Such efforts may enable individuals to understand each other better and develop a sense of mutual respect and appreciation.⁶ As an illustration, a place of worship might organize events that bring together people of different ages, such as communal meals or philanthropic initiatives, with the purpose of promoting intergenerational

⁵ Lesibana J. Rafapa, "Micro and Macro Intergenerational Oral Communication in the Zion Christian Church," in *The Language Loss of the Indigenous* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 115-131.

⁶ John Roberto, "Our Future is Intergenerational," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 1 (2012): 105-120.

exchange and strengthening connections. Such activities can foster mutual understanding and create an atmosphere of camaraderie and collaboration across age barriers.

Challenges can arise for organizations and communities, especially those with a strong traditional foundation, like places of worship, due to intergenerational communication barriers. To address this issue, communication accommodation theory can offer a practical solution by emphasizing the need to adjust communication styles to better align with the preferences and requirements of interlocutors. Facilitating effective communication across diverse age groups necessitates that religious leaders possess a comprehensive understanding and an inherent respect for the distinct communication styles and preferences exhibited by various generations. By doing so, these leaders can tailor their communication strategies to effectively align with the expectations and needs of their respective congregations.

In addition, promoting communication between generations and cultivating empathy can be pivotal in bridging any communication barriers that may exist among varying age groups. Providing chances for individuals of diverse ages to engage and share thoughts can effectively enhance comprehension of unique perspectives and attitudes. Such practices can facilitate the formation of reciprocal regard and admiration for the distinct experiences and wisdom acquired by varying age groups. Initiatives that encourage cross-generational interaction can range from basic events such as communal feasts to informative sessions that are tailored to suit the interests and inclinations of specific age brackets. To augment the potency of such endeavors, it is crucial to establish an environment that is supportive and welcoming to all individuals, regardless of their

age or origin. This involves creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness and reverence that fosters candid communication and a readiness to consider diverse viewpoints.

Facilitating effective communication across generations requires a receptive mindset characterized by transparency, attentive listening, and flexibility in adjusting to varying communication modes and inclinations. Such a mentality can foster a climate of shared comprehension and compassion, reinforcing bonds between diverse age groups and promoting a more profound sense of societal belonging. Aside from establishing channels for cross-generational exchange, it is vital to establish mediums for discourse and cooperation that enable individuals of various age ranges to collaborate toward shared objectives. As an illustration, religious institutions can arrange charitable undertakings that unite individuals of diverse ages in the pursuit of a common goal. Such endeavors can cultivate a shared sense of direction and promote significant engagement among individuals across different age brackets. Harnessing technology is a valuable approach to encourage intergenerational communication by streamlining communication and interaction between various age cohorts. Technology can aid in bridging the communication divide and present a platform for individuals to connect and communicate seamlessly. For instance, a religious establishment could utilize social media networks to stimulate dialogue and exchange among varying age groups. Conversely, administrators could leverage virtual mediums to offer prospects for individuals to engage and connect remotely.

I picked this subject because intergenerational communication is gaining more significance in contemporary society, where people of various age groups are more likely to collaborate and interact. Religious institutions are not exempt from this trend, and

comprehending how different generations communicate within a church community can enhance its solidarity and inclusivity. By acknowledging and bridging communication gaps, a congregation can strengthen its bonds and foster a more vibrant and harmonious environment. This subject matter piques my personal curiosity and holds significant appeal for me. Additionally, I possess a fervent enthusiasm for examining the ways in which communication occurs within religious organizations, with a particular focus on the dynamics between distinct age groups and their methods of interaction.

The exchange of ideas and messages between different age groups is a crucial component of the societal fabric of any community, including those of a religious nature.⁷ Over the past few years, religious institutions have been contending with the obstacles presented by interjection, such as in-person dialogues and printed resources. Conversely, millennials may exhibit a greater inclination towards digital forms of communication, such as electronic mail and social networking sites. Moreover, millennial pastors may adopt a different methodology towards religion and religious practices than the baby boomer congregants. Prioritizing inclusivity and diversity in messaging and practices may be a priority for some, but this approach may not always align with the values of older generations. Baby boomers may hold more traditional views on worship and could find it challenging to connect with younger generations' religious practices. To ensure effective communication across generations in the church, it is necessary to acknowledge these differences and be willing to adjust communication styles and preferences to cater to different age groups' needs. To effectively communicate with all members of a

⁷ Mark A. Van Dyke et al., "Bridging the Divide: A Public Relations Perspective on Intergenerational Communication," *Public Relations Quarterly* 52, no.4 (2009): 19.

community, it is essential to use various communication channels, including face-to-face interactions, digital platforms, and printed materials.

Additionally, incorporating diverse perspectives and religious approaches into sermons and worship practices can be a useful way to engage different age groups. By doing so, individuals of all ages can connect with the teachings and rituals of the church, regardless of their backgrounds and personal beliefs. In addition, promoting intergenerational communication in the church can be facilitated by using dialogue-based communication methods. According to the integration model, dialogue-based communication is a practical approach to foster engagement with diverse perspectives and promote mutual understanding. Through dialogue, people can practice active listening, show empathy towards others' views, and collaborate towards shared objectives. By implementing dialogue-based communication techniques, individuals can develop stronger connections and work together more effectively across different generations. This strategy can prove beneficial in cross-generational dialogues, where varying age groups may hold contrasting outlooks and methodologies concerning the faith.

The church serves as a prominent illustration of a congregation where cross-generational interaction is crucial. Religious institutions unite individuals of various ages for the purpose of adoration, education, and outreach to their society. Nevertheless, intergenerational communication within the church is not devoid of obstacles. When it comes to communication within the church, disparities in communication styles, preferences, and religious attitudes between baby boomers and millennials can create obstacles to effective communication. Baby boomers generally favor in-person

communication, while millennials tend to prefer digital means of communication. Baby boomers place a high value on personal connections and tend to prioritize face-to-face conversation, whereas millennials are more accustomed to technology and find it more natural to communicate via social media, email, and text. The divergence in communication styles can generate discord in the church, as baby boomers may perceive millennials as disregarding or neglecting them, while millennials may believe that baby boomers are not keeping pace with modern times. Apart from communication styles, baby boomers and millennials also have distinct communication predilections.

The communication preferences of baby boomers are steeped in tradition, favoring conventional forms of worship such as sermons, hymns, and prayers. They tend to prefer a formal worship experience that follows a structured and predictable pattern of rituals. On the other hand, millennials place a premium on more contemporary forms of communication, such as live music, videos, and interactive discussions. Millennials tend to favor a worship style that is more laid-back and casual, which enables them to be more flexible and innovative in their approach. However, this can result in disagreements within the church community, as baby boomers may perceive millennials as disregarding tradition, while millennials may feel that baby boomers are resistant to change.⁸

The contrasting religious outlooks of baby boomers and millennials can also impact their communication dynamics within the church. Baby boomers typically hold more orthodox and conventional views on religion, while millennials tend to be more

⁸ Gareth Crispin, "A Theology of Accommodation as a Resource for Integrating Youth and Children into Intergenerational Church," *Christian Education Journal* 14, no. 1 (2017): 7-22.

progressive and receptive to new ideas.⁹ Baby boomers may prioritize unwavering adherence to religious teachings and consider the Bible as the infallible word of God. Conversely, millennials may prioritize issues related to social justice and perceive the Bible as a figurative framework for leading a virtuous life. This divergent approach to religion can potentially result in clashes within the church, with baby boomers interpreting millennials as overly informal or disrespectful, and millennials perceiving baby boomers as overly stringent or critical.

To narrow the communication chasm between baby boomers and millennials in the church, it is crucial to initiate intergenerational discourse. Such dialogue necessitates attentive listening, compassion, and mutual appreciation. Within the church domain, intergenerational dialogue can be encouraged via activities such as Bible studies, small group discussions, and interactive sessions. By establishing a secure and welcoming setting for dialogue, millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants can gain insights into each other's communication norms and inclinations, resulting in enhanced communication efficiency. An alternative approach to enhancing communication between different generations in the church is by utilizing technological tools. Even though face-to-face communication may be preferred by baby boomers, they are increasingly incorporating technology into their communication habits.

Pastors belonging to the millennial generation can use technology to interact with baby boomer members of the congregation, such as sending out email updates, sharing information on social media platforms, and posting relevant materials on the church website. Additionally, baby boomers can be instructed on how to use various

⁹ Eunice Hong and Richard L. Starcher, "Intergenerational Church Splits," *Great Commission Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (2012): 218-235.

technological tools, including video conferencing and texting, to communicate with their pastors and peers within the congregation. Another critical factor to consider when addressing intergenerational communication in the church is the presence of distinct perspectives of different generations towards religion and the church. Baby boomers often view religion as a fundamental component of their identity and may prefer traditional modes of worship.

Conversely, millennials tend to regard religion as a single aspect of their identity and may gravitate towards more informal and contemporary approaches to worship. This contrasting outlook can create tensions within the church and impact communication between baby boomer members of the congregation and pastors belonging to the millennial generation. To tackle this problem, pastors belonging to the millennial generation can endeavor to infuse their worship services with more modern features, such as the incorporation of contemporary melodies or the utilization of multimedia presentations. Simultaneously, it would be beneficial for them to uphold the traditions and inclinations of the older baby boomer members of their congregation. It is also possible to encourage baby boomers to remain receptive to novel approaches and acknowledge the viewpoints of younger age groups.

Divergent perspectives on religion between baby boomers and millennials can create communication challenges in the church. Baby boomers, who matured in the period following the Second World War, generally hold more conventional and conservative religious views. They place great significance on time-honored worship customs, like hymns and liturgy, and may lean towards a more hierarchical structure in their church governance. In contrast, millennials, who reached adulthood in the twenty-

first century, display more progressive and open-minded religious beliefs. Millennial religious leaders place greater emphasis on promoting social justice and environmental sustainability and tend to adopt a more participatory style of worship. These contrasting religious beliefs can impede effective communication between older baby-boomer churchgoers and younger millennial pastors.

The older generation may view the changes being made by millennials in the church as too drastic, while the younger generation may consider traditional church practices to be outdated and in need of revision. This dichotomy of opinions can lead to conflict between the two groups and ultimately undermine communication. To bridge the gap caused by divergent views, encouraging dialogue could prove to be an effective approach. This process entails creating a platform where both baby boomer congregants and millennial pastors can share their views and apprehensions. Small group discussions or forums could be organized to facilitate this exchange, where participants can inquire and clear their doubts. By actively participating in dialogue, both generations can gain insight into each other's perspectives and make concerted efforts towards finding common ground. Effective intergenerational communication in the church also depends on the delivery style of sermons. Different preferences for sermon style and delivery may exist among baby boomers and millennials.

Baby boomers may tend to favor a more formal and structured approach to sermons, while millennials may prefer a more conversational and interactive approach.¹⁰ For instance, baby boomers may value sermons that emphasize scripture and doctrine,

¹⁰ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 204.

while millennials may find sermons more relevant if they relate to their daily lives and experiences. To bridge the gap between these disparities, a blended method of sermon delivery can be employed, which incorporates elements of both styles. This can be achieved by utilizing multimedia tools, such as videos or imagery, to complement conventional scripture-based sermons.

Additionally, integrating interactive activities or small group discussions during sermons can foster engagement among both baby boomers and millennials within the congregation. Moreover, it is crucial to consider the communication channels used to connect with members. While baby boomers may prefer face-to-face communication, millennials may feel more at ease with digital communication. To address these disparities, churches can contemplate utilizing a range of communication platforms to connect with their members, including email, social media, and text messaging. This can aid in ensuring that all members of the congregation receive significant updates and announcements, irrespective of their preferred method of communication. Ultimately, it is critical to take into consideration the leadership's role in promoting intergenerational communication within the church. While millennial pastors may have a distinctive outlook on the church's challenges, they may lack the experience and wisdom of baby boomer congregants, making it crucial to have a balance between perspectives.

Preaching is one of the principal methods pastors use to convey their message to the congregation. It is noteworthy that sermon delivery can differ significantly across various denominations and religious practices. Nevertheless, there are some common patterns in how baby boomers and millennials prefer to receive sermons in the church. Baby boomers generally favor a conventional and dignified approach to sermon delivery.

They usually prefer a structured and formal preaching style, emphasizing biblical exegesis and theological contemplation. Baby boomers commonly place high regard on the pastor's authority and anticipate them to communicate in a respectful and reverential manner. They prefer to receive sermons in person as they place significance on the feeling of belonging and companionship that accompanies being physically present among other members of the congregation. In contrast, millennials prefer a more participative and stimulating style of sermon communication. They typically value genuineness, vulnerability, and creativity in preaching.

Millennials usually expect pastors to address current issues and predicaments and appreciate pastors who are willing to engage with their queries and uncertainties. It is common for millennials to consume sermons via digital channels, such as podcasts or online videos, due to their appreciation of the convenience and flexibility that comes with accessing content on their own schedule. When it comes to the actual content of sermons, there are noticeable contrasts between the preferences of baby boomers and millennials. Baby boomers typically gravitate towards sermons that are rooted in biblical texts and focused on theological concepts. They prioritize sermons that are intellectually rigorous and deeply theological. Conversely, millennials tend to show a preference for sermons that are more applicable and focused on everyday life. While there are differences in the way baby boomers and millennials approach sermons, there are also some areas of similarity. Both groups place a high value on sermons that are engaging, pertinent, and genuine. They desire to hear pastors who are zealous about their message and who can create a personal connection with the congregation.

Additionally, both groups value sermons that are rooted in biblical texts, although they may have differing expectations for how those texts are analyzed and employed. In recent times, digital communication has become an integral component of cross-generational communication in the church, particularly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to social distancing measures and remote worship, many churches have had to adapt their communication strategies. This has resulted in an upsurge in the utilization of digital channels, including online video streaming, social media, and email newsletters. Millennials have been leading the way in this transition towards digital communication in the church. They are more familiar with technology and are more inclined to consider digital channels as a legitimate form of communication. Nevertheless, baby boomers have also embraced digital communication in the church, especially due to the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated that many baby boomers acquire new skills, such as online giving and video conferencing, to partake in remote worship. For baby boomers, in-person communication remains an essential part of cross-generational communication in the church. Face-to-face interactions create opportunities for members of the congregation to develop relationships and reinforce their sense of community. Nonetheless, digital communication has evolved into an important adjunct to in-person communication, particularly for millennials who esteem the convenience and flexibility of being able to communicate at their own convenience.

Interacting with pastors and leaders is a vital aspect of cross-generational communication in the church. It allows members of the congregation to communicate their needs, apprehensions, and expectations, and enables pastors and leaders to provide

guidance and assistance.¹¹ Nevertheless, communication preferences differ between baby boomers and millennials when it comes to communicating with pastors or leaders, which can create obstacles in effective communication. Baby boomers, who came of age during a time of strict social norms and etiquette, are inclined towards a more formal and structured approach to communication with pastors and leaders. They hold respect, authority, and hierarchy in high regard, and anticipate pastors and leaders to communicate in a professional and authoritative manner. Face-to-face communication is the preferred method of communication for baby boomers, whether it occurs during a church service, a meeting, or a personal visit. They appreciate the personal connection and closeness that arises from in-person communication and believe it is the most efficient way to cultivate relationships and establish trust.

Conversely, millennials, who were raised in the digital era, are inclined towards a more informal and conversational approach to communication with pastors and leaders. They value authenticity, transparency, and accessibility, and expect pastors and leaders to communicate in a friendly and approachable manner. Digital channels, such as email, text, social media, or video conferencing, are the preferred method of communication for millennials. They perceive digital communication as more convenient, efficient, and flexible, and believe it allows for more frequent and informal communication with pastors and leaders. These differences in communication preferences between baby boomer congregants and millennial pastors and leaders can create communication challenges. Effective communication can be a challenge between baby boomers and millennial pastors and leaders because of their different communication styles. Baby

¹¹ Jim Merhaut, "Intergenerational Faith Formation Today: Its Impact and Sustainability," *Lifelong Faith Journal* 7 (2013): 28-37.

boomers may view millennial pastors or leaders as disrespectful or lacking authority if they communicate through casual or digital means. Meanwhile, millennials may see baby boomer pastors or leaders as rigid or outdated if they only communicate formally or face-to-face.

Pastors and leaders should recognize and honor the communication preferences of both groups and be willing to adapt their communication styles to better connect with their congregants. This flexibility can help bridge the gap between the generations and promote effective communication within the church community. Leaders in ministry have a range of communication methods and techniques available to them, including in-person interactions, telephone conversations, email correspondence, social media platforms, and virtual meetings. The chosen communication method and style should be based on the needs and preferences of their congregation. The communication style employed should also match the context and audience of the message being delivered. It is vital for leaders to communicate with clarity, brevity, and respect, regardless of the communication channel or style they use. They should steer clear of using technical jargon, ambiguous language, or a patronizing tone. Instead, they should use clear, straightforward, and empathetic language that resonates with their congregation's interests and concerns. Additionally, they should engage in active listening, ask questions, and solicit feedback to ensure that their message is not only comprehended but also well-received.

In the modern era, digital communication plays a significant role in facilitating intergenerational communication within the church. People today are more interconnected than ever, thanks to an array of social media platforms, email, and

messaging applications. As a result, the way people interact and communicate, including in the church, has been transformed. Millennials, who have grown up in a digital world, are comfortable using technology to connect and communicate. They are more inclined to leverage social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to engage with their peers and communicate with their church leaders. The way the church communicates has undergone a major shift from the traditional in-person model.

Baby boomers, who are not as familiar with digital technology as millennials, may prefer face-to-face communication and consider digital communication to be less personal and meaningful. However, many baby boomers have also adopted digital technology and used it to stay connected with their families and communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of digital technology in churches. Several churches have begun to stream their services online, offering a platform for people to worship from home. This has made it possible for more people, particularly those who cannot attend in person due to health reasons, to participate in church services.

Digital means of communication provide increased access to information and resources, which churches can take advantage of by utilizing social media platforms to disseminate information about upcoming events, sermons, and community outreach initiatives. This is especially advantageous for the millennial demographic, who may be more inclined to access information online rather than from printed bulletins. Despite the clear benefits of digital communication, it is important to recognize that face-to-face interaction remains essential within the context of the church. In-person communication creates opportunities for individuals to connect on a deeper level, form relationships, and engage in meaningful conversations. The exchange of nonverbal cues, such as body

language, tone, and facial expressions, which can help enhance understanding and communication, is only possible in face-to-face conversations. For numerous individuals, being physically present with others during worship and prayer is a source of comfort and solace. In-person communication also presents an occasion for pastors and other leaders within the church to offer pastoral care and support to those in their congregations who may be in need.

The integration model proves to be an invaluable asset in examining multifaceted issues, such as intergenerational communication within the church. This model highlights the significance of incorporating various disciplines to obtain a comprehensive grasp of the matter at hand. In this case, the integration model will be employed to integrate communication studies, religious studies, and sociology to delve into the difficulties associated with intergenerational communication within the church.

The study of communication is a pertinent discipline when it comes to investigating intergenerational communication within the church. Communication forms an integral part of any community, including that of the church. Effective communication is essential in fostering a sense of inclusivity, comprehension, and community. In the context of the church, effective communication is critical in promoting the dissemination of religious messages, fostering social connections, and building interpersonal relationships. Similarly, the study of religion is another pertinent discipline in investigating intergenerational communication in the church. Faith plays an integral role in the lives of many individuals, impacting their convictions, principles, and attitudes. The church serves as a community where people gather to express their faith, establish connections with like-minded individuals, and engage in religious practices. Religious

studies offer valuable insights into the ways in which religious beliefs and practices impact communication styles, preferences, and perspectives within the church. The field of sociology is likewise pertinent to examining intergenerational communication within the church. Sociology is the study of human social behavior, encompassing the workings of social relationships, culture, and society. When applied to the church, sociology can offer valuable insights into how social and cultural factors shape communication styles, preferences, and perspectives. It can also provide a framework for understanding how power dynamics and social structures influence communication within the church. Incorporating these various disciplines can contribute to a holistic comprehension of the obstacles associated with intergenerational communication in the church. As an illustration, communication studies can explicate how variances in communication styles and preferences between millennials and baby boomers may impede effective communication.

In addition, sociology can shed light on how social structures and power dynamics can influence communication within the church. To fully comprehend the difficulties of intergenerational communication in the church, it is crucial to examine how communication styles, preferences, and views are molded by social, cultural, and religious influences. As an illustration, the hierarchical organization of the church can shape communication styles and preferences. Baby boomers, who may be more familiar with hierarchical structures, may opt for a more formal and organized method of communication. On the other hand, millennials, who may be more familiar with less hierarchical organizational structures, may favor a more relaxed and informal conversational style of communication. In addition, religious beliefs and practices can

also have an impact on communication styles and preferences within the church. To illustrate, the emphasis on tradition and ritual in certain religious practices may affect baby boomers' inclination towards more formal communication styles.

In addition, millennials' preference for more relaxed and informal communication styles may be influenced by the emphasis on community and social justice in some religious practices. It is also worth noting that social and cultural factors can play a significant role in shaping communication styles and preferences within the church. For instance, cultural values such as individualism and collectivism can impact how different generations approach communication and connection within the church community. The technological and digital communication conventions that are prevalent in society may have an impact on the millennials' inclination toward digital communication.

Similarly, communication styles and preferences within the church may be influenced by the distinct values and beliefs of various cultural groups. The integration of communication studies, religious studies, and sociology can lead to a holistic comprehension of the difficulties associated with intergenerational communication in the church. This comprehension can offer valuable perspectives on how to tackle such communication barriers. For example, churches can adopt a more flexible approach to communication that accommodates different communication styles and preferences. Churches can also provide opportunities for intergenerational communication and relationship-building to create a sense of community and belonging. In addition, religious studies can contribute to the understanding of how religious beliefs and practices impact intergenerational communication in the church. Religious beliefs can influence communication styles and preferences, as well as shape views on religious practices and

worship. The way people worship and express their religious beliefs can vary greatly across generations, with older baby boomers often valuing traditional forms of worship and music, while younger millennials tend to prioritize more contemporary and inclusive practices. Recognizing how religious beliefs shape communication can be instrumental in fostering intergenerational understanding and building a church community that is more diverse and welcoming to all.

Sociology provides valuable insights into the complex ways in which social factors, including demographic variables and cultural norms, shape intergenerational communication patterns within the church context. For instance, diverse life stages can engender unique experiences and perspectives among various age cohorts, influencing their communication preferences and styles. Furthermore, variations in cultural values, such as individualism versus collectivism, can also impact communication preferences and styles, thereby contributing to intergenerational communication challenges in the church. Having a grasp of how social factors influence communication can aid in establishing a church community that is more compassionate and inclusive.

The integration model merges the fields of sociology, religious studies, and communication studies to provide a holistic understanding of the obstacles related to intergenerational communication within the church. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, we can acquire a more profound insight into the multifaceted elements that impact communication preferences, styles, and attitudes, which can assist in creating a more effective response to these challenges. One potential solution to enhance communication among different generations within the church community is to establish platforms for open communication and mutual comprehension. Although baby boomers

and millennials may have varying outlooks, they can develop more profound and stronger relationships by participating in considerate and empathetic communication that encourages knowledge-sharing and learning from each other. The church community can consider implementing organized forums, informal social gatherings, or mentorship programs that foster intergenerational connections.¹² Additionally, utilizing technological advancements can aid in augmenting in-person communication. For instance, digital platforms like online discussion boards or video conferencing can provide an effective avenue for communication across different generations. This approach can help bridge the gap between distinct communication preferences and increase opportunities for engagement and cooperation.

In summary, communication between generations is a pivotal element of the church community that can significantly affect social connections, comprehension, and religious practices. As the church adapts and appeals to a more varied congregation, it is crucial to acknowledge distinct communication outlooks, preferences, and attitudes of various age groups, particularly the discrepancy between baby boomer attendees and millennial religious leaders. Communication hindrances can emerge from these distinctions, but they can be resolved by employing effective communication tactics that unify various fields of study, including communication studies, religious studies, and sociology. The integration model is a valuable tool for tackling intergenerational communication issues in the church by pinpointing the problem, examining it, identifying appropriate disciplines, integrating them, and cultivating a comprehensive comprehension of the matter. By fusing various fields of study, we can attain a more extensive

¹² Allan G. Harkness “Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?” *Religious Education* 93, no. 4 (1998): 431-447.

comprehension of the intricate elements that influence communication styles, preferences, and outlooks within the church.¹³ This awareness can guide us in creating efficient communication tactics that cater to the distinct requirements of various age groups, enhance mutual understanding, and establish stronger social bonds within the church community.¹⁴

A significant discovery of this interdisciplinary research is that while baby boomers and millennials may differ in communication styles and preferences, they both share a mutual longing for social connections and a sense of belonging within the church. Both age groups cherish face-to-face interaction as it nurtures meaningful relationships and encourages a sense of inclusivity within the church. However, millennials also appreciate digital communication since it enables them to connect with individuals beyond the confines of the physical church. Therefore, it is vital to establish a harmonious equilibrium between in-person and digital communication mediums to cater to the requirements of both age groups effectively.

Additionally, it is important not to underestimate the significance of comprehending the social, cultural, and religious factors that affect communication preferences, styles, and outlooks within the church. Through the integration of diverse fields of study, we can obtain a broader and more detailed comprehension of the obstacles and formulate successful communication tactics that cater to the requirements of different age groups within the church. The integration model serves as a practical

¹³ Yves Gerald Francis, “Promoting Intergenerational Harmony at the Dedham Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Southern New England Conference” (Doctoral Thesis, Andrews University, 2023), 31.

¹⁴ Jamie R. Coates, “Join the Band: Benefits of Engaging Intergenerational Volunteers in the Local Church Worship Ministry” (Doctoral Thesis, Liberty University, 2019), 80.

framework for tackling intergenerational communication challenges in the church, and its implementation can enhance a sense of inclusion, foster more profound relationships, and encourage the practice of faith.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

This project acknowledges the importance of the relationship between millennial pastors and baby-boomer congregants. There should continuously be a strong emphasis placed on both generational groups working together to complement the other. There was a great need for effective collaboration and unity between two distinct generational groups to bridge the gap that often exists in local churches throughout the African Methodist Episcopal Churches with younger pastors. This generational gap has created an undeniable divide between millennial pastors and baby-boomer congregants. This project focused on the observed disconnect between millennial pastors, those under forty, and the older, baby-boomer members of the congregation. Thriving for harmony between these two generations requires an integration of biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary perspectives. Participants had an opportunity to express their disconnect and feelings concerning young pastors. The goal was to make the participants feel respected and heard. It was important that they felt a part of the common goal of creating a more unified local church.

With a clear focus, the eight-week sessions were designed to help the millennial pastor and baby boomer congregants. The specific activities included in the program are eight empowerment sessions, pre-and post-surveys, and written activities. In such encounters, participants expressed their own experiences and heard and learned about the difficulties and advantages of inter-generational ministry. The project stresses the need to foster a safe environment of dialogue for the pastors and the congregation to actively talk and listen to each

other constructively. Combining a weekly empowerment session with room for discussion intensifies the need for oneness in the local church. Through open communication, this process provided an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between baby boomer congregants and millennial pastors. By enhancing the well-being of the church, baby boomers shed light on the issues and barriers around millennial pastors. There are a unique set of challenges that come along with being receptive to a new idea, challenge, or change.

Such a project should also be considered in the broader context of leadership in a religious and secular context. Young leaders bring new ideas and approaches that can drive innovation. In a tech-driven world, young leaders have been advocates in all fields, pushing for emerging technology and digital tools to remain relevant and proficient. Young leaders can cast vision and remain engaged until the vision comes to fruition. Some of the common traits of a young leader includes being flexible with change, being open minded to new styles, and learning new ways of doing things. Although the world is constantly changing, younger leaders tend to follow and adapt to sudden cultural shifts.

Lastly, the necessary steps will be taken to create a blueprint that will ultimately promote intergenerational unity among the AME Church. It is with great hope this project could be a potential model that can be adapted to help other congregations that are facing the same issues. This project could be an opportunity to change the trajectory of what church leadership must look like as well as improve the overall future of the local church.

Methodology

The project, "Bridging the Gap Between Millennial Pastors and Baby Boomer Congregants," utilized various methodologies, including pre-surveys, post-surveys, journal entries, and sticky note takeaways. These methodologies provided a straightforward way of collecting the necessary data. Participants were given the space to provide their inner thoughts on being assigned millennial pastors as a training landscape for young pastors wishing to launch out.

Several complex dynamics were discovered among both generations. This qualitative method is vital to ensure that all conclusions drawn from the study are accurate and applicable across different contexts and populations. The chosen methodology is critical in the work necessary concerning baby boomer congregants receiving millennial pastors and leaders within the local church.

Pre-Survey

The pre-survey was the first initial step in gathering data, this was to identify the baby boomer's attitudes, perspectives, and expectations regarding their experience with millennial pastors. The pre-survey questions were:

1. What age group do millennials consist of?
2. What are your thoughts about millennials?
3. How do you feel about millennial pastors?
4. What has your experience been like with millennial pastors?
5. Do you feel as though there is a relational gap between the millennial generation and the baby boomer generation?
6. Could this be a determining factor in whether a person is qualified to fit based upon what generation they fall into?
7. What are you looking to get out of this eight-week journey?

This portion of the project was significant in gaining a better picture of the actual thoughts and feelings toward millennials that baby boomers experience. These questions strategically help to observe future changes in attitudes or beliefs that could be easily measured. It was important to note the preconceived notions already developed by the participants before the start of the sessions. Based upon the preconceived notions, there was much to unpack about the different beliefs concerning millennials. It was important to observe the position of the participants on where they stood as a baby boomer having to receive millennial leaders

consecutively. The pre-survey required baby boomer participants to self-reflect on any biases or stereotypes they may have had concerning millennials. This self-reflection brought about a more meaningful engagement during each phase of the project. In summary, the pre-survey was successfully creating an unexpected new beginning in the life of the church. This tool provided essential data that helped shape the findings and ensured that the process was grounded in the most genuine perspectives of the participants.

Post-Survey

After the final session of week eight, participants completed the post-survey. Each participated in discussions and reflections. The survey reflected as to any hopes of reducing the gap between the pastor and congregants. This survey was instrumental in assessing how well the participants retained the information and allowed space for change. All survey questions remained the same except question number seven. Participants were asked the following question in place of number seven: What were you able to get out of this eight-week journey? The main purpose of the post-survey was to measure any changes and influence made in attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that occurred because of the eight-week sessions. The post-survey encouraged participants to consolidate their learning and reflect on how their perspectives changed. The post-survey was helpful as it confirmed the expected outcomes of their engagement.

Sticky Note Takeaways

The sticky note takeaways were a quick method for needed insights from participants. The sticky note activity required participants to express their thoughts into a brief, one-sentence statements. This method helped clarify the most significant insights and lessons learned after each session. It was clear that there was minimum pressure to process all their thoughts at that moment. To avoid asking for lengthy responses after a sixty-minute session, this approach was practical and quick. Collecting sticky notes from all participants allowed me to visualize common

themes and insights. The sticky notes were strategically identified into categories, providing a common thread among the participants: the lack of faith in young leaders. The sticky notes prepared participants for an introduction to journaling. This method provided the participants with an overview statement of what they learned.

Journal Entries

Journal entries were another component of the data collection process. This strategy enabled participants to express their thoughts and feelings in an unrestricted way. Journal entries provided detailed and thought-provoking data that offered more insight into the baby boomer experience. These entries allowed the participants to intentionally discover their inner thoughts, leading to more realistic and uncensored reflections. With a small notebook, participants journaled as much and as little as they liked. It was interesting getting to see the transformation of the mind that was taking place after each empowerment session. There were no specific prompts to be followed, which released any temptation to under share. This continuous process was valuable in understanding how their perceptions evolved and what factors influenced these changes. Each participant was assured that this journaling method was a judgment-free opportunity to reflect openly and honestly. The journal entries added context to the pre- and post-surveys. This method gave an understanding of the pushback and changes in the mindset of each participant.

Methodology Conclusion

The methodology in the study "Bridging the Gap Between Millennial Pastors and Baby Boomer Congregants" was enriched with various methods of data collection. Each method pre-surveys, post-surveys, journal entries, and sticky note takeaways served as an avenue of measurable and practical outcomes. The pre-survey established the beginning, the post-survey measured change, journal entries gave depth, and sticky note takeaways provided quick and direct

insight. Together, these methods provided a rich understanding of the evident generational dynamics of a baby-boomer congregant and a millennial pastor.

Implementation

Four key elements were taken into consideration when designing the eight-week process. The first key element was implementing the study of Timothy. An essential part of bridging this generational gap is drawing upon biblical narratives highlighting young leaders' role in the early Christian community. Timothy is an inspiring example that offers valuable lessons for millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants, along with scriptural references that support being young and submitted to Christ. The second key element was implementing the life and contributions of Richard Allen. It was important to highlight significant persons who have made great contributions to our country and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Throughout black history, young leaders have emerged wise beyond their years. The historical efforts of figures like Richard Allen further exemplify the importance of leadership across generations. The third element was an emphasis on practical theology and the call to be a bridge builder. Practical theology principles encourage participants to address traditional perspectives, commitment to unity, and willingness to serve regardless of who may be the leader. The last key element acknowledges the various ways of communication, such as reflection, writing, and verbal discussion. Effective communication fosters understanding, reduces conflict, and builds trust, all essential to closing generational gaps.

Seven individuals committed to participating in this project to bridge the generational gap between millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants within a church community. All the participants ranged from the ages of fifty-nine to seventy-three years of age. There were three males and four females represented. Twelve participants who met the age requirement were invited, but only seven committed to participating. The project was structured and designed to foster understanding, dialogue, and unity. All participants were expected to complete a consent

form to participate in the project. Each empowerment session consisted of sixty minutes: thirty-five minutes of empowerment, fifteen minutes of discussion, and ten minutes of reflection and sticky note takeaway. A pre- and post-survey was given at the start of the first session and the end of the last session. After each empowerment session, participants were asked to write on a sticky note their quick one-sentence takeaway. All participants were allowed to participate in moments of verbal discussion throughout the session. Lastly, participants were asked each week to note their thoughts and feelings in a small notebook. The project consisted of ten phases with the essential key elements throughout the implementation.

Phase One: Invitation Letters and Consent Forms

At the beginning of the project, an invitation was sent to twelve participants from the church, specifically targeting members aged fifty-nine to seventy-six, which falls within the baby boomer generation. This phase ensured that participants were fully informed and voluntarily consenting to participate in the project. The letter provided participants with everything they needed to know to proceed with the study. Each participant also had to sign a consent form to ensure they understood the agreement of their involvement. Each participant was assigned their identification number to keep privacy and confidentiality throughout the project. This number was used in place of their name on all collected materials. Participants were advised not to share their identification numbers with other participants. Participants submitted their materials at the end of each session, placing them in large envelopes labeled with their identification numbers. These envelopes were deposited in a designated plastic container face down at the end of each session.

Phase Two: What to Expect/Follow-Up Meeting and Pre-Survey

The importance of phase two was to ensure that participants clearly understood the expectations of the project and to clarify any questions or concerns. A pre-survey was given to all participants during the meeting to gauge the participants' initial attitudes and perceptions regarding the generational gap between millennial pastors and baby-boomer congregants. The session also included watching the video, "Millennials and Baby Boomers Seek to Understand" video by Jubilee followed by a discussion on various generation types. During this discussion, participants felt more knowledgeable about the different types of generations and characteristics. Phase two of the session created a positive tone for the rest of the project. Participants were actively engaged. Many expressed their commitment to learn and be open-minded. The pre-survey results provided valuable insights into the existing perceptions and attitudes, which would later be compared to post-survey data to assess the project's impact.

Phase Three: Week One Empowerment Session - Introduction

This session was an introduction for participants to prepare for the weeks to come. The work towards bridging the gap was beginning and being clearly defined. Each participant had the opportunity to share their pre-survey results. Many voiced their concerns about millennials. The shared thoughts were not positive. Everyone watched the video "Generational Gaps and The Church," video by Church Helper, which provided a detailed description of how generational differences arise within church communities. This was followed by a discussion on the theme "Jesus was young too," which aimed to challenge the participant's negative feelings about youth and leadership in the local church context.

The introductory session successfully established a collaborative and reflective atmosphere. Participants appreciated the opportunity to voice their opinions and showed appreciation for generational differences. The discussions were productive, with participants

starting to recognize the value of understanding their perspectives and how they arrived at such perspectives.

Phase Four: Week Two Empowerment Session - Study of Timothy

The second week focused on an in-depth study of Timothy. Timothy in many ways was relatable for young millennial leaders. Participants engaged in a thorough examination of the life of Timothy. The session covered Timothy's leadership role as a youth. Participants were encouraged to reflect on how age influences the perceptions of others. A discussion followed the study, where participants shared their insights and reflections. Participants were asked to write their great takeaway in one sentence on a sticky note after thinking about what stood out to them about Timothy, what surprised them, and how Timothy's story inspired them.

This session was particularly impactful in helping participants draw direct connections between the biblical narrative and contemporary challenges faced by millennial pastors. This was the week sticky notes were implemented for the rest of the empowerment sessions. They appreciated the use of sticky notes as a reflective tool.

Phase Five: Week Three Empowerment Session - Study of Daniel

The third week continued the study of young leaders in the Bible by focusing on the story of Daniel. Participants were given a brief study of the life of Daniel and his commitment to service to God at such a young age. Participants were asked to discuss Daniel's level of commitment and humility at a young age. The session ended with a discussion, allowing participants to share their thoughts about Daniel. They were again asked to use sticky notes to provide their great takeaway in one sentence to capture their key takeaways.

The study of Daniel examined the positive characteristics he possessed at a young age that are required of us in any generation. The discussions were more in-depth as participants pondered the lesson learned from young leaders throughout biblical times. Participants were

reminded to write in their journals throughout the week. They expressed how new journaling was for them and how beneficial it was to collect their thoughts.

Phase Six: Week Four Empowerment Session – Study of Esther

The fourth week narrowed in on Esther, a young female leader in the Bible. Esther is the perfect example to study relating to age and gender. Participants studied scriptural passages from Esther chapters one and four, highlighting Esther's bravery and leadership at a young age. The session was designed to allow participants to relate to Esther's story and the experiences of young female leaders in the church today. The session ended with a time of discussion. Participants began a time of reflection during the sticky note exercise. The group was asked what inspired them most about Esther's story and how it relates to their perceptions of young leaders, particularly young female leaders in their context.

This session was impactful in highlighting opportunities where age and gender play a part in leadership. The female participants resonated with the story of Esther. Participants were able to gain a better understanding of the struggle women in ministry and leadership across all fields experience. I shared my journey and thoughts concerning my experiences as a young female itinerant elder. The discussions helped to dismantle age-related biases further and foster a more inclusive attitude towards young leaders.

Phase Seven: Week Five Empowerment Session - Study of Joseph

The fifth week focused on Joseph and how he was used by God to overcome many things. Participants were immersed in a study of Genesis chapters thirty-seven through forty-seven, exploring Joseph's life and his faith to dream at such a young age. Joseph was obedient and that is a lesson that can be learned for all generations. During the discussion, the most mentioned was how Joseph was determined to see the good in everything that happened to him. The sticky note takeaway encouraged participants to reflect on what they found most surprising or inspiring

about Joseph's story and how these insights could be applied to their interactions with young leaders in their context. The study of Joseph again rang with the common theme, his youthfulness and determination. During the discussion, participants expressed a growing respect for young leaders. Many participants noted how they had not paid much attention to the age of these biblical leaders.

Phase Eight: Week Six Empowerment Session - Study of Young Leaders

Week six empowerment session shifted from spiritual to secular. These impactful leaders paved the way for young leaders Richard Allen, Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B. Anthony, and John Lewis. The impact of these leaders remains relevant today. These leaders made great strides at a young age. The session aimed to highlight the impact of these individuals and draw parallels to the young leaders in the church today. The sticky note takeaways were inspiring as the participants recognized the greatness of leaders who created change for many generations. The cross-context session was strategic in highlighting biblical narratives and contemporary narratives of young leadership. This proved that age does not matter if there is a dreamer and a dream. Participants gained a new perspective on the potential of young leaders to create change in every facet of life. It was important for the participants to understand the crucial part young leaders play in society and the future. The discussions concluded with participants expressing a newfound appreciation for the sacrifices made by young leaders. Participants related to all having changed views of positive leadership presented in young leaders.

Phase Nine: Week Seven Empowerment Session – The Bottom Line

Week seven presented us with an opportunity to hear from a guest speaker. The guest speaker was a former AME millennial pastor. The guest was invited to speak on the subject, "How Millennials and Baby Boomers Need Each Other." The presentation was highly engaging and thought-provoking for the participants. The speaker presented the need for both generations

to potentially bring great attributes to the table, but we must show up to the table. He asked participants to reflect on what they do well and how it could be coupled with a young leader to impact the kingdom of God. The presenter stated there was no doubt that intergenerational ministry was necessary for growth and sustainability in the church. The session concluded with a group discussion where participants reflected on the key takeaways from the speaker's and former pastor's presentation and the previous sessions. Very well received, and participants enjoyed the presentation. They were overjoyed with the work they committed to over the past seven weeks. Participants expressed a more substantial commitment to fostering intergenerational relationships and acknowledged the importance of both millennials and baby boomers in building a more unified local church. The session successfully tied together the four key elements of the project. Participants voiced positive feedback.

Phase Ten: Week Eight - Participant Dinner and Post-Survey

The purpose of the final phase was to celebrate the journey the participants had embarked upon. The final phase aimed to celebrate the journey participants had undertaken, solidify their commitment to ongoing intergenerational participation, and assess the impact of the project through a post-survey. The project ended with a celebratory dinner, "From Generation to Generation." This was an opportunity to fellowship and celebrate the progress and express my gratitude for the work the participants committed to doing. The dinner provided a relaxed setting for participants to reflect on the journey they had taken and the relationships they had built. After the dinner, participants were asked to sign a pledge to be open-minded and willing to work with and understand all generations within the church, especially those in leadership and the pastorate. This symbolic gesture was aimed at reinforcing the project's goal of unity. Finally, a post-survey was administered to assess the project's impact on participants' attitudes and perceptions. The survey results were compared with the pre-survey data to measure changes in attitudes toward millennial pastors.

The dinner was a great way to end the eight-week journey. Participants expressed a strong sense of accomplishment and a renewed commitment to fostering intergenerational dialogue with future leaders, pastors, and within the church. It was apparent that participants left with a more profound sense of unity and a commitment to ongoing collaboration across generational lines.

Conclusion of Implementation

The project's implementation was structured, combining biblical and historical. The implementation process was safe and fair for all participants. Each session was strategically designed to flow and intertwine into the following week. Each phase built upon the previous one, gradually pushing for a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by intergenerational leadership in the church. There was room to reflect and consider new ways of thinking. Reflective exercises, such as sticky notes and surveys, alongside group discussions and empowerment sessions, provided participants with the knowledge and emotional engagement necessary to bridge the generational divide between millennial pastors and baby boomer congregants. Overall, the project goal was to foster a more cohesive, understanding, and collaborative church community, setting a precedent for future initiatives to bridge generational gaps between leadership and congregants.

Summary of Learning

The project "Bridging the Gap Between Millennial Pastors and Baby Boomer Congregants" addressed the generational divide within the church, specifically focusing on the relationship between young pastors and older congregants. The project hypothesis proposed that by engaging baby boomer congregants in an empowerment session centered around young leaders in the Bible, their attitudes toward young leadership within the church would improve.

The empowerment sessions aimed to foster understanding, reduce friction, and promote unity among the pastor and congregants.

Participants

Eight participants, all from the baby boomer generation, were involved in this project. The methodology included a combination of pre-surveys, post-surveys, journaling, and sticky notes to gather qualitative and quantitative data. These tools were selected to track changes in attitudes, perceptions, and understanding throughout the curriculum. The process was structured over eight weeks, with a new theme, and discussions, meaningful content, and reflective exercises. The appropriate methodology was chosen for this project. The expectations for the participants were clearly defined. No one seemed to get overwhelmed or confused at any time during the eight weeks.

The pre-survey was administered to establish a baseline understanding of participants' attitudes toward millennial pastors and millennials. The data revealed a range of opinions, with most participants expressing discomfort regarding millennials. One hundred percent of the responses described what they felt millennial pastors lack. Various answers described the participant's opinions of the lack of respect, experience, respect for tradition, and social skills. One participant described how the senior pastor should be at least forty years old to be considered for the role. Another comment in the survey was about the abrupt changes made to make the worship services more contemporary, leaving them feeling disconnected from the music, order of service, and even giving tithes and offerings. Participants also noted that they often felt insignificant or misunderstood by younger pastors, contributing to disengagement and reluctance to fully embrace millennial pastors. The pre-survey data proved a significant gap and the need for immediate attention to address these concerns.

The empowerment sessions were received by all the participants. It allowed them to learn, discuss, and reflect. It was eye-opening to hear some of the thoughts and concerns through

our times of discussion. It was eye-opening for them to receive a consistent style of teaching that all related to young leaders in the Bible and throughout history. The video resources provided context and facilitated a deeper understanding of the challenges and strengths of millennials. Some participants were not fully aware at the beginning of our sessions just how millennials think and process things differently. It exposed some of the myths the congregants believed about millennials. They were able to gain a better understanding of the unintentional ways of millennials. The engagement levels throughout the empowerment sessions were consistently high, with participants actively contributing to discussions and showing a genuine interest in the content. Using biblical narratives as a focal point helped contextualize millennial pastors' experiences and became more understandable for the baby boomer participants.

The post-survey was conducted after the eight-week journey to assess changes in attitudes and perceptions. The data indicated a significant improvement in participants' views on millennial pastors and leaders within the church. Participants made several key highlights.

Through journaling and post-surveys, the participants expressed a greater empathy for the challenges faced by millennial pastors. They expressed they had a better understanding of the strengths that young leaders bring. There was also a greater willingness to engage with and be of better support to millennial pastors. They recognized their lack of support because of the age gap and their bitterness toward having a younger pastor. To some degree, they all admitted to having friction with millennial pastors because they felt overlooked and no longer needed in the church. Participants felt more optimistic about the potential for positive intergenerational relationships with millennial pastors and millennials within the church. Other common themes that emerged from the reflections included being more aware of the pressure and anxiety young leaders face, checking their own biases, finding ways to show appreciation to young millennial pastors, and becoming more open-minded in ministry endeavors. Throughout the empowerment sessions, they began to see the pressures and expectations placed on these leaders and recognized the importance of supporting them rather than being overly critical. Participants frequently expressed

appreciation for highlighting young leaders in the Bible and society. Several participants noted personal growth because of the empowerment sessions. They reflected on their own biases and the process of engaging with the content led to a more open-minded approach to young leadership within the church.

When asked the question in the post-survey: What were you able to get out of this eight-week journey? All participants responded very positively. The post-survey reflected positive change in comparison to the pre-survey. It was evident that participants kept an open mind and were receptive from the beginning of phase one of the project. During the last week of our time together, we discussed the importance of being a team player. Everyone recognized the enormous decline in church attendance in our area, and the need for unity and innovations is greatly needed now more than ever.

Personal Observations

At any given moment, every generation will be presented with unique challenges and opportunities rooted in generational differences in communication styles, expectations, theological perspectives, and cultural experiences. One of the most critical aspects of leading baby boomer congregants is gaining a deep understanding of their generational perspectives. They value stability, hard work, and loyalty and often have a strong attachment to tradition, particularly in religious practices. It was evident that this group of baby boomers viewed the church as a second home, a place where their lives started and will ultimately end, and where they find comfort in traditions that have held since their childhood. This has taught me the importance of approaching congregants with sensitivity to the long-held standing traditions and the need to honor those who paved the way while directing the congregation toward the future. I also learned that it is imperative to be patient with change. I realized that the participants were only partially against change. They need, above all, the changes to be communicated and the congregation to be involved in the process, ensuring that they feel valued and heard. I learned the importance of

using a variety of communication channels to ensure that all congregants feel connected and informed. The tone and style of communication are crucial. The participants always appreciate a respectful and formal tone. I was also reminded to take advantage of the experience and wisdom that baby boomer congregants bring to the church. Many baby boomers have decades of professional and ministry experience, wise expertise, and great insights that can significantly benefit the local church. Instead of dismissing concerns I disagree with, I also found it essential to listen carefully and acknowledge their feelings. I learned the importance of taking the time to understand the underlying issues and addressing them with compassion. This project also exposed the need to adapt one's leadership style to meet the needs of different generations. As a preacher, teacher, and communicator, I was also challenged to see that everyone receives the same respect and inclusivity.

Overall Findings

The findings from this project strongly support the initial hypothesis that engaging baby boomer congregants in a curriculum focused on young leaders in the Bible can positively change their attitudes towards young leadership within the church. The data gathered from pre-surveys, post-surveys, journaling, and sticky notes demonstrated that participants not only gained a better understanding of millennial pastors but also became more open to working alongside them in a collaborative and supportive manner.

The project proved that giving older congregants the tools and opportunities to explore the experiences and challenges of young leaders can lead to a more unified church environment. The insights gained from this project can inform further initiatives to foster intergenerational dialogue and collaboration within the church. By continuing to build on the foundations laid by this project, the church can create a more inclusive, understanding, and unified community that leverages the strengths of all its congregants and pastors, regardless of age.

Conclusion

The project "Bridging the Gap Between Millennial Pastors and Baby Boomer Congregants" addressed the generational divide within the church. It was apparent that the baby boomer congregants had not taken the opportunity to consider the great attributes young leaders could potentially offer the church. The project hypothesis proposed that by engaging baby boomer congregants in an empowerment session centered around young leaders in the Bible, their attitudes toward young leadership within the church would improve.

Participants

Eight participants, all from the baby boomer generation, were involved in this project. The methodology included a combination of pre-surveys, post-surveys, journaling, and sticky notes to gather the necessary data. These tools were strategically composed to observe any changes in beliefs and new understandings throughout the various sessions. The tools were purposefully introduced to track trends and shifts in perspectives. The process was structured over eight weeks, with a new theme and discussions, meaningful content, and reflective exercises. The appropriate methodology was chosen for this project. The expectations for the participants were clearly defined. No one seemed to get overwhelmed or confused at any time during the eight weeks.

The pre-survey was administered to establish a baseline understanding of participants' attitudes toward millennial pastors and millennials. The data revealed a range of opinions, with most participants expressing discomfort regarding millennials. One hundred percent of the responses described what they felt millennial pastors lack. Various answers described the participant's opinions of the lack of respect, experience, respect for tradition, and social skills. One participant described how the senior pastor should be at least forty years old to be considered for the role. Another comment in the survey was about the abrupt changes made to make the worship services more contemporary, leaving them feeling disconnected from the music, order of

service, and even giving tithes and offerings. Participants noted immediately they often felt insignificant or misunderstood by younger pastors. These feelings often left them reluctant to work and support their pastor. The pre-survey data proved a significant gap and the need for immediate attention to address these concerns.

The empowerment sessions were received well by all the participants. It allowed them to learn, discuss, and reflect. It was eye-opening to hear some of the thoughts and concerns through our times of discussion. It was eye-opening for them to receive a consistent style of teaching that all related to young leaders in the Bible and throughout history. The video resources provided context and facilitated a deeper understanding of the challenges and strengths of millennials. Some participants were not fully aware at the beginning of our sessions just how millennials think and process things differently. It exposed some of the myths the congregants believed about millennials. They were able to gain a better understanding of the myths and misguided perceptions centered around millennials. It was becoming apparent that they were led to believe misunderstandings. The participation throughout the empowerment sessions was consistent for the most part. Participants were excited to participate in meaningful dialogue every week. They mentioned how great it felt to be able to discuss these key issues within a group that was open-minded and more informed. Using biblical narratives as a focal point helped contextualize millennial pastors' experiences and became more understandable for the baby boomer participants.

The post-survey was conducted after the eight-week journey to observe and compare changes in attitudes and perceptions. With significant improvement in the participants' views on millennial pastors and leaders within the church, a big shift and new interest was sparked. Participants made several key highlights.

Through journaling and post-surveys, the participants expressed a greater empathy for the challenges faced by millennial pastors. They expressed they had a better understanding of the strengths that young leaders bring. There was also a greater willingness to engage with and be of

better support to millennial pastors. They recognized their lack of support because of the age gap and their bitterness toward having a younger pastor. To some degree, they all admitted to having friction with millennial pastors because they felt overlooked and no longer needed in the church. Participants felt more comfortable being more intentional with intergenerational relationships within the church. They feel more likely to pursue opportunities that involve working with younger leaders. Common threads addressed in discussions included being aware of the pressure and anxiety young leaders face, checking their own biases, finding ways to show appreciation to young millennial pastors, and becoming more open-minded in ministry endeavors. Throughout the empowerment sessions, they began to see the pressures and expectations placed on these leaders and recognized the importance of supporting them rather than being overly critical. Participants frequently expressed appreciation for highlighting young leaders in the Bible and society. Several participants noted personal growth because of the empowerment sessions. They were able to identify the various ways in which they could learn something new and not develop negative connotations. It was rewarding to see the participants actively participating in deep thought and self-reflection. They reflected on their own biases and how the process of engaging with the content they received had led to a more open-minded approach to young leadership within the church.

When asked the question in the post-survey: What were you able to get out of this eight-week journey? All participants responded very positively. The post-survey reflected positive change in comparison to the pre-survey. It was evident that participants kept an open mind and were receptive from the beginning of phase one of the project. During the last week, the importance of being a team player was discussed. Everyone recognized the enormous decline in church attendance in our area, and the need for unity and innovations is greatly needed now more than ever.

Personal Observations

At any given moment, every generation will be presented with unique challenges and opportunities rooted in generational differences in communication styles, expectations, theological perspectives, and cultural experiences. One of the most critical aspects of leading baby boomer congregants is gaining a deep understanding of their generational perspectives. Participants identified the obvious differences but also acknowledged how the differences in generations can complement the gap. They value stability, hard work, and loyalty and often have a strong attachment to tradition, particularly in religious practices. It was evident that this group of baby boomers viewed the church as a second home, a place where their lives started and will ultimately end, and where they find comfort in traditions that have held since their childhood. This has taught me the importance of approaching congregants with sensitivity to the long-held standing traditions and the need to honor those who paved the way while directing the congregation toward the future. I also learned that it is imperative to be patient with change. I realized that the participants were only partially against change. They need, above all, the changes to be communicated and the congregation to be involved in the process, ensuring that they feel valued and heard. I learned the importance of using a variety of communication channels to ensure that all congregants feel connected and informed. The tone and style of communication are crucial. The participants always appreciate a respectful and formal tone. I was also reminded to take advantage of the experience and wisdom that baby boomer congregants bring to the church. Many baby boomers have decades of professional and ministry experience, wise expertise, and great insights that can significantly benefit the local church. Instead of dismissing concerns I disagree with, I also found it essential to listen carefully and acknowledge their feelings. I learned the importance of taking the time to understand the underlying issues and addressing them with compassion. I was convicted of not being the best listener. This project also exposed the need to adapt one's leadership style to meet the needs of different generations. As

someone who is committed to furthering this work in intergenerational ministry, I was also challenged to see that everyone receives the same respect and inclusivity.

Overall Findings

The findings from this project strongly support the initial hypothesis that engaging baby boomer congregants in a curriculum focused on young leaders in the Bible can positively change their attitudes towards young leadership within the church. The data gathered from pre-surveys, post-surveys, journaling, and sticky notes demonstrated that participants gained a better understanding of millennial pastors and their leadership styles. The data proved that congregants are now more open to working alongside them in a collaborative and supportive manner. It is important that pastors feel supported by their congregants to ensure the pastor feels affirmed and appreciated.

The project proved that giving older congregants the tools and opportunities to explore the experiences and challenges of young leaders can lead to a more unified church environment. The insights gained from this project can assist with further initiatives to foster intergenerational dialogue and collaboration within the church. Trust is required to further this work ensuring that everyone is treated with the same respect and grace. This project has opened the door for the church to create a more inclusive, understanding, and unified local church.

Conclusion

The project "Bridging the Gap Between Millennial Pastors and Baby Boomer Congregants" successfully addressed the critical challenge facing congregants of Quinn Chapel AME Church. The generational divide between younger clergy and older congregants have plagued many congregations. Now having acknowledged the barriers and missed opportunities for collaboration, the pastor and congregants can work cohesively. Divides are often rooted in differences in methods of preferred communication, values and motivations, leadership

expectations, and worship preferences, which could lead to misunderstandings, tension, and even disengagement within the church. These differences must not lay dormant. These differences, if not addressed, can lead to a decline in membership and a broken relationship between the pastor and the people. Congregants must be allowed to express their true notions concerning their leadership. There is one common goal unity. By implementing eight empowerment sessions teaching the experiences of young biblical and historical leaders, the purpose of the project was to invite participants into biblical studies.

The project's central hypothesis was that if baby boomer congregants engaged in a curriculum centered on young leaders in the Bible, their attitudes toward young leadership within the church would improve. This hypothesis was rooted in the belief that by exploring biblical narratives by teaching on the strengths, challenges, and successes, of young leaders in the Bible, older congregants would develop a more positive and supportive view of millennial pastors.

Through the course of the project, this hypothesis was validated. The structured eight-week curriculum, which included in-depth studies of biblical figures such as Timothy, Daniel, Esther, and Joseph, as well as reflective exercises and discussions, proved to be effective in shifting the attitudes of baby boomer participants. The pre-and post-survey data markedly improved the participants' views on young leadership. It was evident in the significant increase in respect for millennial pastors, and greater openness to intergenerational collaboration on future ministry projects and initiatives.

A greater common goal can be accomplished when all generations are working together hand in hand. The project succeeded in creating a space where older congregants could explore their concerns, engage in meaningful dialogue, and reflect on the value of young leadership within the church. Participants reported a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by millennial pastors and a recognition of the strengths that younger leaders bring to the church community. It makes a difference when individuals can empathize or receive a glimpse into what ongoing challenges and feelings millennial pastors may experience. This new perspective was not

only evident in the survey data, but also in qualitative feedback gathered through journaling and sticky note reflections. Participants expressed a newfound respect and a willingness to support their younger pastors. This is especially helpful in the overall health and well-being of the pastor when he or she feels supported and seen. The project was successful in fulfilling its primary objectives. Other key components were noted to help future work in this area. This work can be expanded beyond other denominations as well as age groups. These insights highlight both the project's strengths and areas where improvements could enhance its impact.

The Importance of Biblical Narratives

The use of biblical narratives brought to light the positive attributes that young leaders have the potential to possess. It was an intricate way of getting participants to develop a greater trust in their leadership. A key takeaway from a biblical perspective from this project is the power of biblical leaders in bridging generational gaps. The foundation of the project was created with the framework of scripture. Biblical leaders that were covered such as young Timothy, Esther, and Daniel proved helpful case studies showcasing the abilities and gifts given by God. The change in perspective was greatly yielded to an in-depth study of scripture. The major component of the project design allows the participants to connect with God and their relationship with Him. It would be beneficial to further enhance the biblical case study to include additional biblical figures or explore other themes. Providing other opportunities for engagement, the biblical narratives could serve as a guide for spiritual mentorship with author generations.

The Importance of Discussion

Each weekly discussion provided a safe space for participants to voice their concerns and share their experiences with millennials. For future projects, it would be beneficial to incorporate even more opportunities for meaningful dialogue. Participants expressed interest in small groups and breakout sessions to provide a more intimate setting among various groups. A more extensive

curriculum can be created and customized according to the involved age groups. There is also an opportunity to bring in other generations to be a part of these discussion groups to provide a greater stride to closing the generational gap that many churches face. Encouraging ongoing dialogue beyond the project's duration could also help sustain the positive changes achieved during the curriculum. Participants signed an agreement during the last session to continue the work inwardly and outwardly for the sake of the growth and betterment of the local church.

The Importance of Reflection

Reflection played a major role in the success of this project. In each weekly discussion, participants were encouraged to be authentic and transparent. With additional planned and structured conversations, a great deal of change can take place. Journaling and sticky notes played a significant role in helping participants process and unravel their perspectives. As new lessons were learned, participants physically made notes of their new insights. These methods allowed participants to process their thoughts and emotions, making the learning experience more impactful and memorable. Another observation was expanding the use of reflection to enhance the overall experience of the project. More deliverables and content can be created for other churches to lead and participate in this commitment to closing the generational gap. A workbook and devotional could be created to provide a more attractive and intentional way of participating. Devotionals often motivate participants to spend time in prayer and retreat to a quiet place before processing major issues. These practices could also be used to facilitate more profound personal growth and spiritual development.

Areas of Improvement

The project was successful in all areas. However, several adjustments could be made to improve the participant's journey. A comment was made expressing that the sessions be spread out. This could easily be a three to six-month series. They expressed the need for more time to

process from week to week. In the future, it might be beneficial to allow more time for participants to digest and reflect on the material before moving on to the next topic. This could be achieved by extending the duration of the project sessions and adding additional sessions that focus on reflection and brainstorming. It can be a lot to unpack within eight weeks. While participant engagement was usually high, there were instances where some individuals were less verbal in times of discussion. This could be due to a variety of factors, which could be noted in a more precise way. To address participant engagement, future projects could include more diverse methods of engagement, such as anonymous feedback forms, digital platforms for sharing thoughts, or small group discussions that might feel less intimidating than more extensive group settings. Another addition to this project would be to provide further coaching and one on one opportunities for participants. Providing participants with a more tailored conversation could further help individuals who may be struggling to connect with their leadership.

There is potential for future projects that can be utilized for the AME Board of Examiners and pastoral training programs with young leaders and pastors. A curriculum can be created that can be customized for any ministry context. With the objective being to study and understand generations, young leaders will be provided with the necessary communication skills and tools to succeed amongst generational divides. This project explores the various common traits among each generation. Young leaders would be able to provide feedback and provide case studies from their current context. The AME Board of Examiners could use this project as a model to train pastors for itinerant ministry that may be going to ministries that have older congregants. Pastors can create templates for collaboration and planning. The Board of Examiners utilizing this project could connect more experienced pastors to mentor millennial pastors. This project could be a model for intergenerational ministry across all denominations.

The project had eight participants, but more participants would produce a greater impact. Providing this curriculum to other congregants within the church and denomination could result in a movement to better relationships between local pastors and congregants of all generations. Future iterations of the project could also explore opportunities for intergenerational events that bring together younger and older congregants in more informal settings, such as social gatherings, joint service projects, or intergenerational worship services. These activities could help reinforce the lessons of the curriculum and foster a greater sense of community across generational lines. Facilitating this eight-week project with baby boomer congregants has deepened my understanding of their needs, values, and perspectives. I have areas of my leadership that need improvement. This project has also reinforced the importance of humility and openness in leadership. By listening to the concerns of baby boomer congregants and being willing to adjust my approach based on their feedback, I was able to build stronger relationships and create a more inclusive and supportive church environment. These lessons will continue to inform my leadership as I work to bridge generational gaps and foster unity within the church.

The "Bridging the Gap Between Millennial Pastors and Baby Boomer Congregants" project proved the importance of the continued work and research needed in intergenerational ministry. Organized spaces are needed within local churches to foster more conversations, intentional reflection, and biblical understanding, all anchored in the common focus of unity. As I look to the future, I am encouraged by the progress made during this project and am committed to continuing this work. The knowledge gained from this experience will guide my future endeavors to build cohesive intergenerational

relationships in the local church. The church is a place for all generations to be welcomed, seen, valued, and heard. All generations including leaders want to feel a sense of belonging within their local church. It is certain that research is needed to engage congregants of all ages in meaningful conversations about leadership, faith, and community. This could include developing additional curriculums focusing on other aspects of intergenerational relationships, offering workshops on communication and collaboration, or creating mentorship programs that pair younger and older congregants. Intergenerational research in the church is necessary for the future of the church.

In conclusion, the project has been a transformative experience for the participants and me. The hypothesis was successful but there is room for further growth and expansion. Positive changes were observed throughout all deliverables and discussions. The lessons learned throughout the process all point to the potential for continued improvement in bridging generational gaps within the church. The effort to foster intergenerational unity and understanding will continue to be a primary focus, with the ultimate objective of cultivating a strong, cohesive, and unified local church.

APPENDIX A
INTRODUCTORY GUIDE

INTRODUCTORY GUIDE

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN MILLENNIAL PASTORS AND BABY BOOMER CONGREGANTS

EMPOWERMENT SESSION GUIDE [60 Minutes]

INTRODUCTION TEMPLATE: Phase One

- OPENING PRAYER (5min): Open with a prayer asking God to do a work within our hearts to bridge generational divides.
- INTRODUCTION/THANKS (10min): Thank everyone for coming. Give insight why this project is important to you. Provide an opportunity for anyone that has questions about the project.
- WATCH VIDEO (15min): Generational Gaps And The Church – Church Helper
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTPyk31uofE>
- Discussion of Video (10min): What was your greatest take away from the video?
- Read & Discuss (20min): Luke 3:23

“Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry. Jesus was known as the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Heli.”¹

 - What comes to mind when you hear that Jesus was only thirty years old when he began his public ministry?
 - Do you think followers were sometimes skeptical about his age?
 - What perspective do you have towards young leaders?
- Moment of Reflection (5min): Quiet time/Journal reflection
- Closing Prayer

¹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing Group, 1992), 125-155.

APPENDIX B
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN MILLENNIAL PASTORS AND BABY BOOMER CONGREGANTS

EMPOWERMENT SESSION GUIDE [60 Minutes]

TIMOTHY OUTLINE: Phase Two

- OPENING PRAYER (5min): Open with a prayer asking God to do a work within our hearts to bridge generational divides. Ask God to show us something important through the life of Timothy.

- TIMOTHY - *Dear to God* (35min):

- Key Verses:

From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. God sent me to tell about the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus. To Timothy, a dear son to me. Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.³ I always remember you in my prayers, day and night. And I thank God for you in these prayers. He is the God my ancestors served. And I serve him, doing what I know is right. ⁴ I remember that you cried for me. And I want very much to see you so that I can be filled with joy. ⁵ I remember your true faith. That kind of faith first belonged to your grandmother Lois and to your mother Eunice. And I know that you now have that same faith. (2 Timothy 1:1-5)

Paul came to Derbe and Lystra. A follower named Timothy was there. Timothy's mother was Jewish and a believer. His father was a Greek. The brothers in Lystra and Iconium respected Timothy and said good things about him. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him. But all the Jews living in that area knew that Timothy's father was Greek. So Paul circumcised Timothy to please the Jews. ⁴ Paul and the men with him traveled from town to town. They gave the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. ⁵ So the churches became stronger in the faith and grew larger every day. (Acts 16:1-5)

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

- Characteristics of Timothy¹:

- Well trained: Acts 16:1-3
- Preacher/teacher: Acts 17:14
- Faithful: Philippians 2:22
- Genuine: 1 Timothy 4:6
- Strong Faith: 1 Corinthians 4:17

1. Timothy was loved by Paul: Paul gave Timothy a chance to lead.
2. Timothy was prepared to lead: Timothy was disciplined and raised in the faith.
3. Timothy had character: Timothy was a true leader with a servant's heart.
4. Timothy worked tirelessly: Timothy embraced challenges and opportunities.
5. Timothy was young: Timothy was youthful and accomplished a lot in his youth.

- Discussion (15min): What was your greatest take away from the video?
 - What characteristic about Timothy stood out the most?
 - How do you think Timothy was received?
 - What lessons can we learn from Timothy?
 - How does this session empower you to follow young leaders?

** Reflection Song: God Chaser – William Murphy

- BIG PICTURE (5min): What is your sticky note take away?
- QUIET TIME (5min): Journal any thoughts/ideas/questions
- Closing Prayer

¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, trans, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), 135 -154.

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